

# **The personalism of Denis de Rougemont:**

Spirituality and politics in 1930s Europe

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## Abstract

Neither communist, nor fascist, the personalist third way was an original attempt to remedy the malaise of liberal democracies in 1930s Europe. Personalism puts the emphasis on the human person – understood to be an individual *in relation* to others – as the foundation and aim of society. Yet, because of the impossibility of subjecting the human person to a systematic definition, personalism remains complex and multifaceted, to the extent that it might be best to speak of ‘personalisms’ in the plural. The various personalist movements that emerged in France in the 1930s are little known, and the current historiography in English misrepresents them.

This dissertation is a study of the various personalist movements based in France in the 1930s, examining their spiritual research and political philosophy through the vantage point of Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985). In Rougemont lies the key to understanding the personalist groupings because he was the only thinker to remain active in the two foremost movements (Ordre Nouveau and Esprit) throughout the 1930s. The personalism of Ordre Nouveau was the most original, in both senses of the term. It deserves particular attention as an important political philosophy and an attempt to justify political and economic federalism in 1930s Europe. Whilst an Ordre Nouveau activist, Rougemont can be looked upon as the mediator and federator of personalisms in the 1930s.

However, Rougemont’s particular contribution to personalist thought was more spiritual and theological than political or economic. Rougemont saw it as his vocation, in a strict religious sense, to oppose ‘totalitarian’ regimes. In the final analysis, Rougemont’s personalism was best expressed in the minor classic *L’Amour et l’Occident* (1939). Love, as the affirmation of personal freedom and responsibility vis-à-vis other persons, is the closest illustration of what lies at the heart of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont.



## **Preface**

This dissertation is my own work and contains nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others, except as specified in the text and Acknowledgements.

The dissertation does not exceed the regulation length of 80,000 words excluding footnotes, references, and bibliography.

Primary texts have been quoted in the original French, including any inconsistencies in the spelling of names.

## Acknowledgements

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I am most grateful to Dr Robert Tombs for giving generously of his time to supervise me on a subject initially far from his expertise. I could not have done without his ability to decode Franglais, and his encouragement and advice have been most important to me. Stephen Thomas has made some crucial suggestions on my draft introduction and Chapter 1, helping me to accept that a comprehensive introduction to personalism (as indeed of any –ism) was an impossible task, and thus making the final product come out earlier and I hope clearer. Marcus Plested has read the entire draft as a friend and I thank him for his special sense of *le mot juste* in English.

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Finally, my gratitude goes to all the family and friends who have taken care of me in the last three years. For their hospitality during my research visits, I should like to thank warmly Martine and Nicolas Zaech, Lucie and Maxime Egger, Laurence and Sophie Muguet, as well as Dominique and Alain Jacquet. I dedicate this dissertation to my father and his Cambridge group.



## Abbreviations

B.P.U.N.: Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel

AF: Action Française

*NRF: Nouvelle Revue française*

ON: Ordre Nouveau





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# Introduction

## Personalism: the problem of definition

There are, in the history and geographical diffusion of ideas in modern thought, at least ten different schools of personalism. One must distinguish between American idealistic personalism, Russian personalism, the various European personalisms of the early twentieth century, the later communitarian personalism in Catholic circles (from Latin America to Poland), and latterly, African personalist philosophies. Each school has its own understanding of the person, and most agree on the impossibility of defining the essence of a person. Perhaps one may say that personalism is about resisting the definition of the person.

There has been no overall study of all the various personalisms. Stanley Rudman has recently made an attempt at ‘re-situating personhood’ by analysing the Boston school of late nineteenth-century personalism, alongside the 1930s and 1940s French personalism of Emmanuel Mounier, and also alongside contemporary feminism ‘even when the term “person” is not used’.<sup>1</sup> It is true that feminism remains known for its claim that the personal is political. However, one has to set reasonable limits to what can be called ‘personalist’, and the use of the word ‘person’ is one of them. The examples chosen (without contextual awareness) led Rudman to the conclusion ‘that there is very little that holds all personalists together except their opposition to various forms of materialism’.<sup>2</sup> But anti-materialism is surely not enough to identify ‘personalism’ and finally Rudman admitted that ‘a fuller history of “personalism” waits to be written’.<sup>3</sup> It would be unnecessary to attempt a history of personalism covering both American and European traditions: they had little in common, save the name.

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<sup>1</sup> See his Chapter 6: ‘Resituating personhood: embodiment and contextuality’, in Stanley Rudman, *Concepts of personhood and Christian ethics* (New studies in Christian ethics. Cambridge, 1997), 103-18.

<sup>2</sup> Rudman, *Concepts of personhood and Christian ethics*, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Rudman, *Concepts of personhood and Christian ethics*, 109.

American personalism developed in the nineteenth century, as a late development of German idealism. Even when it designates philosophical systems in America, the term ‘personalism’ has myriad uses. Rufus Burrow Jr. has given an account of the various American personalist currents.<sup>4</sup> Two main currents may be distinguished: on the one hand, an individualistic form of personalism, put forth by Walt Whitman, in the 1860s;<sup>5</sup> on the other hand, American personalistic idealism, founded by Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910).<sup>6</sup> American personalistic idealism, emerged in academic philosophical and Methodist theological circles, in Boston and Los Angeles. It holds that only persons (understood as self-conscious agents) and their characteristics exist; reality consists of a society of interacting persons. Typically, an American personalist would also hold that finite persons depend for their existence on God, who is the Supreme Person, having intelligence and volition. American personalistic idealism was developed by different thinkers in the twentieth century; most notably by Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>7</sup> The European personalisms that occupy us here are altogether different.

The focus of this dissertation is France in the 1930s, where small groups of intellectuals chose the notion of person as the rallying cry for a personalist movement with political and social ambitions. Originally, their professed aim was to defend the freedom and creativity of each human being. This was especially relevant to the situation of 1930s Europe, with the increasing influence of communism and fascism, both movements that subordinated the individual to the collective. This personalist movement is largely forgotten today, despite the fact that it asked important questions and developed into a social movement and a political philosophy. Why, then, did it recede into obscurity?

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<sup>4</sup> Rufus Burrow Jr., *Personalism: a critical introduction* (St Louis, 1999). Burrow mentions the French personalist Charles Renouvier and the German personalist William Stern, but none of the other non-idealistic personalisms.

<sup>5</sup> Walt Whitman, 'Personalism', *The Galaxy*, V, 5 (1868). Reissued in a bilingual edition by Bohumil Gacka, *Demokracja i personalizm* (Lublin, 1994). I owe this information to Christian Roy.

<sup>6</sup> Besides the book quoted above, see Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Boston, 1908); Paul Deats and Carol Robb (eds), *The Boston personalist tradition in philosophy, social ethics, and theology* (Louvain, 1986); Bogumil Gacka, *American personalism* (Lublin, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> To get an idea of the multiple trends of thought that claimed the title ‘personalist’ in America in the twentieth century, one may refer to Thomas O. Buford and Harold H. Oliver (eds), *Personalism revisited. Its proponents and critics* (New York, 2002).

To this question, the standard answer is that personalism did not have the conceptual apparatus of the Marxism of Gramsci or Althusser, nor the philosophical precision of the existentialism of Merleau-Ponty and perhaps Sartre.<sup>8</sup> In France, personalism has been presented as an ‘attitude’, a perspective, an aspiration.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian historian John Hellman once remarked that it was easy to see why a philosophy that was not a philosophy proved as ephemeral as Sartre’s existentialism proved marketable.<sup>10</sup> However, like personalism, existentialism is a style of thinking rather than a definite logical method. And for all his philosophical aspirations, Sartre wrote in a literary mode, like most personalists. Despite the problem of definition, Sartre’s existentialism became popular and was widely translated. Therefore, it is not the lack of a definition or the absence of an obvious philosophical method that caused ‘French’ personalists to fall into oblivion.

Several factors contribute to explain why personalism has been largely forgotten. First, in the 1940s, Sartre and his friends of *Les temps modernes* took a philosophical position very similar to the ‘French’ personalism of the 1930s, and so French existentialism rendered a separate movement, personalism, redundant in the minds of many. The adjectives ‘existential’ or ‘existentialist’, and to a lesser extent ‘personal’ and ‘personalist’, became catch-alls for many thinkers from the 1930s to the 1960s. Then, with the structuralist attack on subjectivity, both ‘French’ personalism and existentialism have been undermined. And lastly, with the questioning of the intellectuals’ authority to speak on public and especially moral matters, personalism is less likely to meet approval, even though there is more and more discussion concerning the person, human dignity, conscience, and the self.

Like the French existentialists (and before them), personalist thinkers had proved very ‘French’ with respect to political *engagement* in their writings.<sup>11</sup> They were confident of the

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Préface', *Emmanuel Mounier: Ecrits sur le personalisme* (Paris, 2000), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Following Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme* (Collection Esprit, Paris, 1936).

<sup>10</sup> John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950* (Toronto, 1981), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Denis de Rougemont, as we shall see, was one of the first writers to call for ‘engagement’. For comparative perspective, see esp. Stefan Collini, 'Intellectuals in Britain and France in the twentieth century: confusions, contrasts - and convergence?' in Jeremy Jennings (ed.) *Intellectuals in twentieth-century France. Mandarins and Samurais* (London, 1993), 199-226.

role of the intellectual in society, believing that it was their mission to act in the political sphere. They were characteristically French, not only in language, but also in their conception of the role of the philosopher or thinker.

To begin to recover a sense of what personalism meant in the 1930s, it is necessary to revise a long-lasting cliché. Brian Jenkins – to quote the most recent instance – has noted: ‘*Personnalisme* was a doctrine associated above all with Emmanuel Mounier and his social-Catholic collaborators on the review *Esprit*’.<sup>12</sup> However, personalism was neither Emmanuel Mounier’s doctrine originally, nor a social-Catholic movement in the 1930s. Michel Winock’s political history of the journal *Esprit*, which remains the most widely-read study of personalism, can be criticised for perpetuating the cliché that personalism was invented by Emmanuel Mounier and his collaborators at *Esprit*.<sup>13</sup> A prominent historian today, Michel Winock wrote this book as a young man living in the *Esprit* community in Châtenay-Malabry, and did not hide his allegiance to the movement. Similarly, Gérard Lurol’s extensive research on the philosophy of Mounier leaves the reader unaware of the international origins of personalism.<sup>14</sup>

The Canadian historian Christian Roy has sought to rectify this bias, with particular reference to the key figure of Alexandre Marc (originally Lipiansky), a Russian émigré who effectively imported personalism into France, via Germany.<sup>15</sup> The various personalist theories that had developed in Germany in the 1910s were on the decline in the late 1920s, when the term was taken up by Alexandre Marc. He started to develop ‘personnalisme’ in France around 1931, as a convenient term for a reflection on concrete human beings, with spiritual as well as material concerns. Through Marc, ‘le personnalisme’ became the doctrine of the *Ordre Nouveau* (ON) group, a non-confessional, ‘neither right nor left’ movement.

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<sup>12</sup> In Brian Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right* (Oxford, 2005), 64n136.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950* (2nd edn. Paris, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Gérard Lurol, *Emmanuel Mounier. vol.1, Genèse de la personne; vol.2, Le lieu de la personne* (2 vols. Paris, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Christian Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe (1904-1934): L'Ordre Nouveau aux origines du personnalisme* (Nice, 1999).



In 1930s France, ‘personnalisme’ proved useful in the call for a spiritual (but not necessarily religious) reassessment of society. The spiritual emphasis is to be understood by contrast to primarily material interests. ‘Spirituel’, for personalists, included religious as well as non-religious and anti-religious ideas. The personalism that emerged in France at the turn of the 1930s was a third way in politics and, as I shall argue, in spirituality too. Originally, personalism not only aimed at ‘neither right nor left’ politics, but also sought a ‘neither religious nor secularist’ line.

Supplementing Christian Roy’s analysis, the German scholar Thomas Keller has emphasised the importance of cultural transfer and cultural exchange between Germany and France in the shaping of a non-confessional personalism in France.<sup>16</sup> Far from being invented by a young generation of Catholic thinkers in France at the turn of the 1930s, the so-called ‘French’ personalism was, to a significant extent, inherited from Russian and German philosophers of the older generation. Subsequently, there was a ‘pluralisation of personalism’ (to use Keller’s expression): various branches of personalism blossomed in France and, after the war, throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> Keller’s idea will be examined here, with regard to 1930s France.

All personalists agreed on the absolute value of the human person and the importance of personal relationships. In reality however, the conviviality of their discourse could be replaced by bitter internecine quarrels. Emmanuel Mounier put it euphemistically in his *Personalist Manifesto* of 1936, quoted here in the English translation of 1938: ‘Personalism is for us at present a sort of general pass-word. We are using it as an inclusive term for various doctrines that in our present historical situation can be made to agree upon the elementary physical and metaphysical conditions of a new civilization.’<sup>18</sup> In 1930s France, there was an

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Keller, ‘Le personnalisme de l’entre-deux-guerres entre l’Allemagne et la France’, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe* (Nice, 1999), 455-562.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse: Personalistische Intellektuellendebatten der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich, 2001). On modern personalism in France and Germany, see esp. Keller, ‘Le personnalisme de l’entre-deux-guerres’, 489-94.

<sup>18</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*. Transl. as Emmanuel Mounier, *A personalist manifesto* (Translated by Monks of St John’s Abbey London. New York, 1938), 1.

ongoing debate as to what personalism meant;<sup>19</sup> to the degree that each personalist thinker seemed to have had his (they were mostly men) own definition of it. Hence the need for a vantage point to study the various personalist movements that developed in the 1930s. In Denis de Rougemont (1906-1885) lies the key to understanding the personalist groupings, because this Swiss writer was the only thinker to remain active in the two foremost movements – ON and *Esprit* – throughout the 1930s.

### **Denis de Rougemont: an unjustly neglected personalist**

There is an excellent biography of Denis de Rougemont by the Swiss writer Bruno Ackermann.<sup>20</sup> While I have been more sceptical about certain points than Ackermann, I acknowledge my indebtedness to him. His work is wholly commendable, and it would not have been possible to carry out this study if Ackermann had not prepared the field, classified the archives in Neuchâtel, and established a detailed bibliography of Rougemont's published works. There are two main differences between our studies.

Firstly, Ackermann's initial project was a work of literary criticism. His version of Rougemont's intellectual trajectory emerged as a 800 page-long preamble to the study of his 'non-private diaries' (*journaux non-intimes*).<sup>21</sup> In the course of this 'preamble', Ackermann has studied personalism as a phase of *engagement* in Rougemont's career.<sup>22</sup> Unlike Ackermann, I am primarily interested in the various personalist movements and ideas, and I study Rougemont because he provides a vantage point to recover, as far as possible, the personalist thought of the 1930s in its complexity.

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<sup>19</sup> Véronique Auzépy-Chavagnac has spoken of a 'débat autour du sens à donner à la notion de personnalisme', with particular reference to the debate between Jean de Fabrègues and Emmanuel Mounier. Véronique Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2002), 322.

<sup>20</sup> A full historical biography of Rougemont remains to be written. The detailed analysis of Ackerman stops in 1946. Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle. De la Révolte à l'engagement; Combats pour la liberté, Le Journal d'une époque* (2 vols. Geneva, 1996). An oral history has looked at the period from 1948 to 1960: Mary-Jo Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne* (Lausanne, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle* (vols. 1 and 2), 59-866.

<sup>22</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 249-376, 497-522.

Secondly, our interpretation of intellectual history differs, partly because I am writing ten years after him, and partly because I benefit from the important cultural-transfer studies quoted above, by Roy and Keller. Ackermann has given an evocative portrait of Rougemont within his generation – which was the prevalent tool of the French history of intellectuals when he was researching, in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>23</sup> I hope to enlarge and deepen Ackermann’s analysis, by being more critical of Rougemont’s self-presentation as being ‘above the fray’, and by showing the relevance of cross-border analysis for the study of personalism. I seek to put the concern with the human person into the historical context of 1930s Europe.

I argue that Rougemont stood out as a mediator between personalist movements, not in the sense that he was a neutral arbiter, but in so far as he sought to federate the various personalist groups. I am not the first to notice that Rougemont played a crucial role as a mediator between different personalist movements. In the 1980s, Pascal Balmand published two articles asserting that Rougemont mediated between various poles of intellectual debate in France.<sup>24</sup> Rougemont contributed equally to the journals *Esprit* and *L’Ordre Nouveau* (of the ON group) throughout the 1930s. Besides, Rougemont’s nationality provided him with particular links with Switzerland, and offers a unique opportunity for the study of personalism in that country. Thus, there are two dimensions to Rougemont’s mediating role – across international boundaries and between personalist movements – both of which are examined in Part I.

### **Historiographical issues: method and interpretation**

For the purpose of studying the social and political dynamics of personalism, Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of the literary field proves helpful.<sup>25</sup> However, mine is not a

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<sup>23</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 21-56.

<sup>24</sup> Pascal Balmand, 'Denis de Rougemont', *La Revue des revues*, 3 (Spring 1987), 10-11; Pascal Balmand, 'Denis de Rougemont et le courant personnaliste: archéologie d'un engagement intellectuel', *France Forum*, 250-1 (1989), 53.

<sup>25</sup> See esp. Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art, Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (2nd edn. Paris, 1998); Pascale Casanova, *The world republic of Letters* (Translated by M.B. Debevoise. Harvard, 2005); Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953* (Paris, 1999).

prosopographical study of personalism. I focus on one key thinker, his social role, political philosophy and spiritual research. In discussing the role of Denis de Rougemont as a mediator, I follow cultural-transfer theorists, who have described a series of transnational mediators.<sup>26</sup>

This dissertation is a study in intellectual history, not the least because personalists, like most thinkers in history, largely failed to implement their ideas in the 1930s. In seeking to recover an understanding of the intellectual activity of the past, and focussing on ‘ideas in context’, I follow the Cambridge School approach. Recently, Melissa Lane has emphasised the embedded nature of political philosophy, in the past and present.<sup>27</sup> My initial interest in the study of personalism was prompted by an apparent contrast: personalism stated the inherent freedom of the human person in 1930s Europe, a time and place when freedom was so notoriously abused. Personalist writers articulated a dissatisfaction with the political and economic systems of the time and a longing for the transcendent, which extended far beyond their readership. This makes personalism significant from the intellectual and cultural point of view, even though it remained a tiny social movement and a political failure.

In political and cultural history, various aspects of personalism(s) have been studied as the doctrine of the eclectic groups successively qualified as: ‘non-conformistes des années trente’; ‘nouvelles relèves spiritualistes’; or else proponents of third-way discourses.<sup>28</sup> The term ‘third way’ is preferable, for reasons developed in Chapter 1. It is widely acknowledged that political personalism was a rejection of communism and parliamentary democracy.<sup>29</sup> The various personalisms were variants of the ‘neither right nor left’ discourses in 1930s Europe. Needless to say, the ‘third way’ is a recurring theme in history. In the context of 1930s

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<sup>26</sup> This historiographical trend started with Michel Espagne and Michel Werner, *Transferts, Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand* (Paris, 1988). See also H.M. Bock's study of socio-cultural mediators between France and Germany: Hans-Manfred Bock, 'Créateurs, organisateurs et vulgarisateurs. Biographies de médiateurs socioculturels entre la France et l'Allemagne au XXe siècle', *Revue d'Allemagne*, 33-4 (2001), 453-67.

<sup>27</sup> Melissa Lane, *Plato's progeny: how Socrates and Plato still captivate the modern mind* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Olivier Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30* (Paris, 2002); Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*; Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années trente. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (2nd edn. Paris, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Since the classic study of Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années trente. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (1st edn. Paris, 1969).

Europe, it is reminiscent of various generic definitions of fascism. Was personalism, then, a proto-fascism?

The problem is complex since both personalism and fascism are notoriously difficult to define. Some scholars, including Zeev Sternhell, John Hellman, and Jean Jacob, have argued that personalism, without being 'pure' fascism, paved the way for it.<sup>30</sup> Others, such as Michel Winock, Philippe Burrin, and Bernard Comte, have maintained that personalism stayed clear of fascism, and even combated fascism in France.<sup>31</sup> We shall see that personalism is at the centre of what remains controversial in the debate concerning *fascisme à la française* today. On the one hand, personalists claimed to defend personal freedom in 1930s Europe; on the other hand, they were a third way in politics, not unlike fascism.

How does this dissertation, considering the main personalist movements in the 1930s through the vantage point of the Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont, compare to studies of 'non-conformistes des années trente', 'nouvelles relèves spiritualistes', third-way discourses as a whole, and 'proto-fascist' discourses, in particular? The discussion here offers a general picture of the context in which personalism developed as a social movement, it shows how personalism diversified, and analyses the strategies of each of the major personalist groups (Part I).

Then, the discussion turns to the political and spiritual dimensions of personalism, with particular reference to Rougemont (Part II). To date, the philosophical and theological questions raised by personalists in the 1930s have not been considered in depth. Thus, I hope to make a contribution by the depth and scope of the analysis. Without being a comprehensive study of personalism, this dissertation gives a tableau of the various personalist movements and doctrines in 1930s France and Switzerland.

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<sup>30</sup> John Hellman, *The communitarian third way: Alexandre Marc's Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000* (Montréal, 2002); Jean Jacob, *Le Retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau", Les métamorphoses d'un fédéralisme européen* (Geneva/Paris, 2000); Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche* (3rd edn. Paris, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive fasciste, Doriot, Déat, Bergery: 1933-1945* (Paris, 1986); Bernard Comte, 'Mounier sous Vichy: le risque de la présence en "clandestinité publique"', in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L'actualité d'un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l'UNESCO* (Paris, 2003); Bernard Comte, *Une Utopie combattante, L'École des cadres d'Uriage, 1940-1942* (Paris, 1991); Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*.

## **Structure of the dissertation**

It is necessary to begin with a short chapter to clarify the key notions and paradigms that have been applied to the personalism of the 1930s. Chapter 1 seeks to explain the emergence of a personalist philosophy and movement in France. One important and difficult question has been the centre of attention in the historiography: was personalism novel in time and space? Three answers have been given, following three paradigms: the concept of generation; the distinction between realist and spiritual activists; and the analysis of cultural transfer across international boundaries. The first approach tends to present French personalism as an invention, the second as a renewal, and the third as a transfer from foreign philosophies. I shall argue that each paradigm is overly simplistic, if it is not complemented by the two others.

Whether personalism was an innovation depends on whether there was, prior to personalist philosophy, a similar conception of personhood as that which personalists developed. The various senses of the notion of ‘personne’, in interwar France, are an indispensable starting point for the intellectual history of personalism, which has been surprisingly bypassed by historians to date. By undertaking semantic discriminations, one explains how personalism was the result of innovation and transfer, and why it stands for complexity.

Part I then reviews the different personalist movements in the context of 1930s Europe, from the vantage point of Denis de Rougemont’s role as a mediator between the various personalist groups in France and Switzerland. Personalism also stands for diversity.

Chapter 2 is the most biographical: it assesses the importance of Rougemont’s Swiss origins and formation for his entry into literature and politics. Before 1931, Rougemont could not be personalist because the term did not exist in French. However, the 1920s remain essential as a period of formation. It was then that his literary and belle-lettrist mode of

writing developed, and that he became interested in the themes of existence and of the crisis of civilisation, which would be the cornerstones of his commitment as a writer.

Chapter 3 takes a chronological approach, in order to show the progressive emergence of various personalist groups in France, between 1931 and 1938. It revises the view that personalism was primarily a Catholic and leftist ideology. *Esprit* belatedly recycled the proposals of the *Ordre Nouveau* group, which was a ‘neither right nor left’ personalism. After 1934, personalism divided into various groups: from the federalist personalism of ON to the rightwing corporatist personalism of the ‘*Jeune Droite*’, through the communitarian personalism of *Esprit*, and the ecological personalism of the Bordeaux *Esprit* group. The various thinkers bitterly disagreed with one another, with the notable exception of Rougemont, who allows us to understand how the various groups were related.

Chapter 4 enlarges the question of the different personalist revolutionary movements, by emphasising the alternative between a federation of all personalists and their probable failure as separate groups. As international tensions grew and the polarisation of European societies built up, Rougemont intensified his efforts to federate the revolutionary personalist movements. The chief outcome of these efforts was not a more efficient revolutionary movement in France, as Rougemont had hoped, but, paradoxically, a force for resistance against war and revolution in Switzerland.

Focussing on personalism as a political philosophy, Part II shows how the doctrine of federalist personalism (Chapter 5), combined with a theological commitment, allowed Rougemont to oppose fascist ideologies with force (Chapter 6) and, strange though it may seem, with love (Chapter 7).

Chapter 5 focuses on the personalism of the *Ordre Nouveau* group (ON), between 1931 and 1938. This focus is indispensable given the hazy character of personalist movements. I concentrate on ON because it developed the most original doctrine of personalism in France in both senses of the term: it was not only initiative, but also creative. ON is especially important because it was the group that Rougemont actively joined in 1932.

Moreover, the focus on the personalism of *Esprit* and Emmanuel Mounier has resulted in a historiographical distortion about the evolution of personalism, which needs to be rectified. The federalist personalism of ON was an ambitious attempt at re-thinking the basis of modern political theory.

Chapter 6 addresses the controversial question of the relation between personalism and fascism as generic phenomena. It shows why the parallel is justified: both personalism and fascism were third ways in 1930s Europe. Nevertheless, it argues against any bipolar classification. The categories of ‘fascism’ (or ‘proto-fascism’) and ‘anti-fascism’ cannot account for the complex struggle in which the actors were engaged. The example of Denis de Rougemont suggests that the concept of ‘political religion’ helps to recover a sense of the personalist fight against fascism.

Finally, Chapter 7 argues that Rougemont’s personalism was best expressed in *L’Amour et l’Occident* (1939). A fresh reading of this minor classic allows us to conclude that Rougemont’s works have anthropological and theological foundations, as well as political and moral aspirations. This is not particularly original for a Swiss writer. Neither is it unusually profound: one might expect a similar remark for most of the spiritual third ways that developed in 1930s Europe. Thus, this dissertation is fundamental to our understanding of one of the lesser-known, if far-ranging, strands of modern European history.



## **Chapter 1. Emergence of personalism in 1930s France: contingency and continuity**

In 1938, the sociologist Marcel Mauss gave his Huxley Memorial Lecture on the problems of interpreting the notion of person in the modern Western world.<sup>32</sup> He observed that this notion remained ‘imprecise, delicate and fragile’, ‘requiring further elaboration’.<sup>33</sup> Was Mauss hinting at the much discussed personalism in France at the time? The reasons why it was said to be ‘delicate and fragile’ on the eve of the Second World War are clear. But how was it ‘requiring further elaboration’? Why was it ‘imprecise’? Since the 1930s, the multifaceted, complex and contradictory aspects of the person have remained a rich source of confusion for analysis of the various personalist doctrines. This chapter aims at clarifying key notions and setting the scene for the study of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont that will follow. Before making some basic semantic discriminations, it is necessary to start with the different paradigms that historians have used to approach the personalism of the 1930s.

### **1. Personalism in 1930s France: invention, renewal and transfer**

French personalism became the focus of historical debate through political scientists. In 1960, Jean Touchard (who was then general secretary of the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques), published a key article on the particular ‘esprit de 1930’, characterised by a ‘un front commun de la jeunesse’ transcending the left-right divide in politics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Marcel Mauss, 'Une catégorie de l'esprit humain : la notion de personne, celle de « moi »', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 68 (1938), 263-81. Quoted in English translation, in Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (eds), *The category of the person: anthropology, philosophy, history* (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> In Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes (eds), *The category of the person: anthropology, philosophy, history*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> See Jean Touchard, 'L'esprit des années trente', *Tendances politiques dans la vie française depuis 1789* (Paris, 1960), 89-120.

Following Touchard, the political scientist Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle published a pioneering thesis on *Les Non-conformistes des années trente* (1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1969).<sup>35</sup> Loubet del Bayle argued that the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’, between 1930 and 1933, had been the most important ideological event of interwar France.<sup>36</sup>

The ‘non-conformistes’ included the personalist groups of ON and *Esprit*, and some recently formed right-wing movements (often called ‘Jeune Droite’ in Mounier’s expression). The main strand of Loubet del Bayle’s interpretation was that they were a young generation of intellectuals responding with originality to the famous ‘crisis of civilisation’, at the turn of the 1930s. While subsequent work has extended or refined Loubet del Bayle’s study, it remains central to the historiography. The most significant additions and revisions have concerned the generational and novel character of the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’. In this section, we shall see that three paradigms have been used: the concept of generation; the distinction between realist and spiritual discourses; and finally, the analysis of cultural transfer across international boundaries. The first approach tends to present French personalism as an invention, the second as a renewal of political discourse, and the third as a transfer from foreign philosophies.

## **Generational identity**

It was the personalists’ own claim that they represented the unprecedented concerns of a new generation. The concept of generation was debated across Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Its systematic use as a tool of analysis dates from this period, following the studies of the sociologist Karl Mannheim.<sup>37</sup> After briefly recapitulating how generational analysis has developed in the 1980s, I shall assess the notion of ‘non-conformisme des années trente’.

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<sup>35</sup> Republished recently: Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*.

<sup>36</sup> His book, initially a thesis in political science, is now a classic study of the interwar period Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, esp. 31. Reissued Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Karl Mannheim, ‘Das Problem der Generationen’, *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, 7 (1928), upon which most works on the concept of generation came to be based.

A pioneer in the field, Loubet del Bayle drew on the publications of a few actors. As Olivier Dard has noted,<sup>38</sup> he accepted uncritically Daniel-Rops' *Les années tournantes* (1932), which claimed to be the testimony of a movement gathering 'divers groupes de la jeunesse' on the basis of 'une certaine camaraderie d'âge', 'un accord sentimental', and 'un certain nombre d'observations critiques'.<sup>39</sup> Following the actors' own claims, it became a prerequisite for personalist or 'nonconformist' historiography to emphasise generational identity.

In the late 1980s, Pascal Balmand defined the generation of the personalist intellectuals of the 1930s by age, of course, and by the consciousness of forming a common generation characterized by the idea of community.<sup>40</sup> Balmand was writing at the time when Jean-François Sirinelli set out an influential model for research on French intellectual generations.<sup>41</sup> According to Sirinelli, identification of a generational identity requires at least three elements: a common age-group; a decisive and formative event; and shared realms of sociability. His analysis could be enlarged by reference to Robert Wohl's *The generation of 1914*, which provides an important European dimension, missing in Sirinelli's approach.<sup>42</sup>

The personalist groups which are the subject of this study fulfil the three criteria defined by Sirinelli, and they fit into the European debate analysed by Wohl. First, for the great majority, they were born between 1897 and 1909. Then, most of them were too young to have fought the First World War, but did witness subsequent revolutions throughout Europe (namely the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the Spartakus revolution in Germany in 1918-19, the upheavals of 1930-3 and the 'German Revolution' of the Nazis in 1933). This generation missed serving in the Great War, but, as Wohl put it, 'was marked forever by its passions and the disillusionment and disorder that followed in its wake.'<sup>43</sup> This is crucial if we

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<sup>38</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel-Rops, *Les Années tournantes* (Paris, 1932), 88-91.

<sup>40</sup> Pascal Balmand, 'Les jeunes intellectuels et "l'esprit des années trente": un phénomène de génération?' *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP* (Nov. 1987), 49-63.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle. Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris, 1988); Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.) *Génération intellectuelle* (Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire du temps présent, special issue Nov. 1987. vol. 6. Paris, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Wohl, *The generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Wohl, *The generation of 1914*, 36.

are to understand how engrossed they were with the idea of a revolution. As for Sirinelli's third criterion, their common mode of sociability and action was characterised by meetings in study groups and small journals.

There can be no doubt about their strong sense of generational identity. The call for a '*Rajeunissement de la politique*' (to quote a book edited by Bertrand de Jouvenel in 1932) did express a reality.<sup>44</sup> Oliver Dard has established that, from the sociological point of view, the writers calling for a 'spiritual' renewal of politics formed a particularly homogeneous group.<sup>45</sup> They tended to be men from the middle layers of society, whose main activity was writing. They were trained in the humanities; philosophical, literary, and theological references would be most common in their writings.<sup>46</sup> The concept of nonconformism suggests elitist intellectuals battling the conformism of mass culture, reminiscent of the Victorian 'public moralists' studied by Stephan Collini.<sup>47</sup> This suggests the limits of the 'nonconformist' claims of unprecedentedness.

The conflict of generations has been a classical theme in literature and in politics since the late nineteenth century at least. Before the First World War, Agathon's famous survey developed the argument that the (vertical) cleavage young vs. old replaced the horizontal divide opposing nations, classes and political parties.<sup>48</sup> By the 1930s, the appropriation of the concept of generation by elite literary culture had achieved the status of a literary genre in Europe. The 'non-conformistes des années trente' worked under the assumption, characteristic of generational portraiture since the nineteenth century, that generations were reflected most faithfully in the works of literary intellectuals, and that they, despite being a negligible

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<sup>44</sup> Henry de Jouvenel (ed.), *Rajeunissement de la politique* (Paris, 1932); see also A. Blanchet, *Les jeunes à la croisée des chemins* (Paris, 1932); and the articles on the theme of youth in 'Témoignages sur la jeunesse française', *La Revue française*, 4 (25 April 1933) and in 'Querelles de générations et crise des démocraties', *Notre Temps*, 7<sup>th</sup> year, 3 series, 201-2 (2-9 July 1933).

<sup>45</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 146.

<sup>46</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 146.

<sup>47</sup> Stefan Collini, *Public moralists: political thought and intellectual life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> For an analysis of the phenomenon of generational thinking in relation to the survey 'Les jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui' by Agathon (pseudonym of Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde), see Wohl, *The generation of 1914*, 5-18.

minority in sociological terms, embodied the concerns of the new generation.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, emphasis on the discontinuity of generational experience was one of the elements of continuity in the genre, together with the sense of being entrusted with a special historical mission.<sup>50</sup> In all respects, the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’ (and personalists in particular) conformed to the rules of the genre.

Finally, whilst claiming to break with the politics and philosophy of the 1920s, the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’ inherited more than they would admit. The writers’ fight for the spirit (*l’esprit*) in defence of humanity was hardly novel. In the aftermath of the First World War, spiritual concerns had been expressed in a series of manifestos.<sup>51</sup> The starting point of the group *Ordre Nouveau* (ON) – which was to define personalism in France – may be dated back to the joint research of Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, in the late 1920s.

For Robert Aron (the future French Academician), the meeting with Arnaud Dandieu was ‘l’événement déterminant de [sa] vie intellectuelle’.<sup>52</sup> Aron and Dandieu had been linked to surrealist milieux. Whilst rejecting the surrealist and socialist movements they had once supported, they shared the anti-dogmatic attitude of the *Révolution surréaliste*.<sup>53</sup> In 1927, Aron and Dandieu – disillusioned with post-war society and looking for a doctrinal solution to what they saw as a global state of dereliction and disintegration – started to work towards a revolutionary political programme.<sup>54</sup> Like many (former) surrealists, Aron and Dandieu

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<sup>49</sup> This assumption seems to be a rule in the genre of generational portraiture, see Wohl, *The generation of 1914*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Wohl, *The generation of 1914*, 41.

<sup>51</sup> In particular: Henri Barbusse (‘Internationale de la pensée’, May 1919), Romain Rolland (‘Déclaration d’indépendance de l’esprit’, June 1919), and Henri Massis (‘Pour un parti de l’intelligence’ July 1919) For more details, see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 146.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Aron (1898-1975) became an essayist and historian. Quotation from Robert Aron, *Fragments d’une vie* (Paris, 1981), 95.

<sup>53</sup> Founded in 1924 by André Breton, Louis Aragon, Pierre Naville and Benjamin Péret, *Révolution surréaliste* was the main journal of the surrealist movement until 1929.

<sup>54</sup> As Robert Aron explained in 1935: ‘Dandieu et moi, à partir de 1927, alors que nous ignorions encore ceux qui devaient se joindre à nous et qui travaillaient de leur côté dans un isolement semblable, en période de prospérité, bien avant le début de la crise, [...] ignorant encore plus le nom d’Ordre Nouveau [que notre effort] devait prendre et qui devait être apporté deux ans plus tard, [...] nous avons fait, sur un plan fixé par Dandieu, le tour des questions urgentes, depuis la base philosophique jusqu’aux solutions pratiques. [...] Une jeune fille bienveillante a accepté pendant deux ans d’assurer le secrétariat de ces séances que des esprits « réalistes » auraient dit inefficaces.’, in Robert Aron, ‘Réforme ou révolution’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 3, 17 (Jan. 1935), 17-18.

attempted to promote non-utilitarian practices in industrial countries on the basis of ethnology.<sup>55</sup> Aron and Dandieu published their first joint article in the dissident surrealist journal *Bifur* in 1929.<sup>56</sup> It was followed by two essays in the 'Europe' series of the Rieder publishing house: *Décadence de la nation française* (May 1931) and *Le Cancer américain* (October 1931).<sup>57</sup> These essays criticised the sclerosis in interwar France, whereby patriotism turned into nationalism, democracy into Jacobin centralisation, and French revolutionaries into partisan politicians.

To be revolutionary, in Aron's mind, was to start with reflecting upon the deep roots of the crisis of civilisation, in the isolation of the study, without concrete and immediate objectives.<sup>58</sup> This method was already well established in the late 1920s, and it was not unprecedented. In 1905-1910 already, graduates started to meet on a regular basis to discuss topical questions (regarding economics and international politics in particular).<sup>59</sup> More generally, there were important elements of continuity between the 1920s and the 1930s. Serge Berstein and others have shown how the 'immense intellectual effervescence' of the turn of the 1930s was rooted in 1926-7, and could be interpreted as a consequence of the First World War.<sup>60</sup> In short, the 'non-conformisme des années trente' must be seen as one phase within a broader attempt to renew politics, the economy, and society as a whole.

## **Realist vs. spiritual paradigm**

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<sup>55</sup> The 'Essai sur le don' (1923-4) by Marcel Mauss (the nephew of the sociologist Durkheim) was highly influential on the quest for a 'non-utilitarian' economy in the interwar period. Thomas Keller has shown that the anthropology of the gift played a crucial role in the thinking of Dandieu, Bataille, Marc, Leiris, Caillois, Queneau, Blanchot, and Lévinas. See Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 495-6, 513-16.

<sup>56</sup> See R. Aron and A. Dandieu, 'Un phénomène de névrose sociale, le plan Young' was the first joint publication of Aron and Dandieu, quoted in Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, 99-100.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le Cancer américain* (Paris, 1931); Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française* (Paris, 1931).

<sup>58</sup> Aron, 'Réforme ou révolution', 17-18.

<sup>59</sup> See 'Le jeune barreau parisien au début des années vingt' in Gilles Le Béguec (ed.) *Avocats et barreaux en France, 1910-1930* (Nancy, 1994), 136.

<sup>60</sup> Serge Berstein, *La France des années trente* (Paris, 1993), 91.

The historian may be reluctant to accept ‘non-conformisme’, not only because it overemphasises discontinuity and originality, but also because it draws on the protagonists’ own categories. With the ambition of overcoming these limitations, Oliver Dard has called for an analysis of the ‘nouvelles relèves des années trente’, a concept he coined himself.<sup>61</sup> He has distinguished two types of ‘nouvelles relèves’: on the one hand, the ‘réalistes’, who called for a rational (technical) running of the state by ‘competent’ people; and on the other hand, the ‘spiritualistes’, who saw the ‘réaliste’ plans for domestic reform and improvement of international relations as opportunistic and illusory.<sup>62</sup>

Dard’s distinction between the calls for a holistic ‘révolution spirituelle’ and the reforms and adjustments of the ‘réalistes’ is an important contrast. However, there were many points of contact between ‘réaliste’ and ‘spiritualiste’ groups.<sup>63</sup> As Dard himself has admitted, a rigid opposition would be simplistic.<sup>64</sup> Rather than sheer disagreement, theirs was a difference in slogans. For those whom Dard has called ‘spiritualistes’, spiritual values should prevail over economic matters (‘primauté du spirituel’). However, the political philosophy of personalists was more complex than Dard’s distinction allows. Some rejected economic matters as secondary, thus dismissing Marx and Marxism in a rather unsophisticated way. Others however gave Marx’s thought careful consideration, and for them emphasis on the spiritual included concern for the material (concern being a value, and thus ‘spiritual’ in itself).<sup>65</sup>

Thus, it is important not to draw a strict line between the ‘réaliste’ pole, the spiritual trend, and the more conventional milieux. This would be particularly unfortunate in the case

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<sup>61</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*.

<sup>62</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> E.g. the Moulin Vert Club in Paris was a meeting place for both Luchaire’s realists and the ecumenical discussions organised by Alexandre Markovich Lipiansky (future founder of the ON group under the pseudonym Alexandre Marc). See Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 81-6; Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 41-3. On Luchaire’s circles, see Rita Thalmann, ‘Du cercle du Sohlberg au comité France-Allemagne: une évolution ambiguë de la coopération franco-allemande’, in Hans-Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, and Michel Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy, les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années trente* (2 vols. Paris, 1993), 67-8.

<sup>64</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, esp. 93-4.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 5 on the federalist personalism of ON.

of ON, since this group did not fit neatly into a single category. I suggest (and this is a claim that will be fully substantiated in Chapter 5) that the ON expressed a primary concern for the spiritual, while defending economic and political positions not dissimilar to ‘réalisme’. In calling for a European union, as in their attention to economic or ‘technocratic’ issues, future ON members were much closer to the ‘réalistes’ of *Notre Temps* or *Les Cahiers bleus* than to the ‘Jeune Droite’ (with which Dard has classified them). Moreover, ‘réalistes’ and ‘spiritualistes’ had intertwined trajectories. Future ON theorists were regular contributors to the established *Revue des Deux Mondes* (especially Robert Aron,<sup>66</sup> and Henri Petiot, alias Daniel-Rops, who also published in *Notre Temps*, the main paper of the ‘réalistes’). In other words, the alleged ‘non-conformisme’ – and marginality – of the future personalists should not be exaggerated.

It is perhaps unnecessary to draw a line between ‘réalistes’ and ‘spiritualistes’ in interwar France because of further limitations to Dard’s paradigm. Firstly, Dard’s main argument for adopting the new expression ‘nouvelles relèves’ is that it does not raise the problem the actor’s own categories, since it has been invented specifically by the historian.<sup>67</sup> However, this choice is not as impartial as it may seem. Dard criticises Loubet del Bayle’s use of the term of ‘non-conformisme’ on the grounds that it was coined by the actors themselves, and then goes on to adopt the concept of ‘réalisme’, equally claimed by contemporaries and equally connoted.

Finally, there is a problem when Dard defines ‘réalisme’ through ‘compétence’, understood as evidence of an impulse to technocracy and good management. Kevin Passmore has shown that competence is in the eye of the beholder: in interwar France the notion of ‘compétence’ was claimed throughout the political spectrum, from moderate republicans to monarchists.<sup>68</sup> Dard shares with the ‘réalistes’ the idea that what defines ‘compétence’ is an economic approach to social and political problems. His approach is no less embedded

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<sup>66</sup> See Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, 19-33.

<sup>67</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 9. If this term was to be translated, ‘relieving guard’ would keep the military metaphor. I owe this suggestion to Christian Roy.

<sup>68</sup> Kevin Passmore, ‘The construction of crisis in interwar France’, in Brian Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism, essays on the French authoritarian right* (Oxford, 2005), esp. 169-72.



historically than that of Loubet del Bayle. While Dard emphasises continuity in the interwar period, Loubet del Bayle tended to present personalism as an invention. The study of cultural exchange shows it was largely a transfer from foreign philosophies.

## **Cultural transfer and cultural exchange**

While ‘non-conformistes des années trente’ and ‘nouvelles relèves spiritualistes’ are not ideal concepts, they designate an actual trend of thought in France – ‘l’esprit des années trente’ classically studied by Touchard<sup>69</sup> – which belonged to a broader wave of third-way discourses in Europe. Among the many movements attempting to renew politics from a spiritual point of view, which emerged in the late 1920s and coalesced in the 1930s, French personalism was one of those relying most on cultural transfers and cross-cultural exchanges. Christian Roy, Thomas Keller and Catherine Baird have proved the value of cross-border analysis in the field of personalist studies.<sup>70</sup>

First and foremost, Roy has confirmed John Hellman’s thesis, in the 1980s, that *Esprit* represented a belated form of personalism, borrowed from Alexandre Markovich Lipiansky, better known under his ‘western’ diminutive of Alexandre Marc.<sup>71</sup> Born in 1904, Lipiansky showed precocious philosophical interests, and during the Russian revolution, he was affiliated with the Socialist Revolutionary Party (non-Marxist), and risked his life before escaping the country in 1919 in the most hazardous conditions.<sup>72</sup> In the 1920s, four main

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<sup>69</sup> Touchard, ‘L’esprit des années trente’).

<sup>70</sup> In particular Catherine Baird, ‘Le *Cercle oecuménique* (1926-1930): An antecedent of French personalism among Russian émigrés’, *L’Europe en formation*, 315-316 (Winter 1999- Spring 2000), 161-75; Catherine Baird, ‘Religious communism? Nicolai Berdyaev’s contribution to *Esprit*’s interpretation of communism’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 (April 1995), 29-47; Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*; Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*.

<sup>71</sup> Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*. When launching the *Ordre Nouveau* in 1931, Lipiansky opted for the pseudonym Alexandre Marc, officially acknowledged in 1935. I refer to him as Lipiansky until 1931, and to Marc thereafter.

<sup>72</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 53-61, 93.

sources of inspiration led him to develop a ‘personalist’ thinking: German phenomenology, French sociology, non-Thomist Catholic philosophy, and Russian religious thought.<sup>73</sup>

Russian philosophy – Berdiaev, Frank and Merezhkovskii in particular – played the most important part.<sup>74</sup> It is interesting to note that Frank’s essay ‘The Ethic of Nihilism’ (written in 1909) contained all the essential points Marc would make in the 1930s: the need to reconcile absolute values with the reality of human life, the predominance of the spiritual, the search for a neither right nor left line in politics, and the critique of ‘conformist’ intelligentsia.<sup>75</sup>

Around 1931, when the *Ordre Nouveau* group started personalism in France, the Christian protagonists of this group met Nikolai Berdiaev regularly in some pioneering ecumenical gatherings. One may quote a recollection of these ecumenical discussions of the early 1930s, from a letter to Denis de Rougemont:

Nous nous réunissions, rue de Buci, chez René Gillouin, parpaillot comme toi, flanqués de notre inlassable fédérateur Alexandre Marc, qui représentait avec moi le catholicisme romain, du père Gillet (non le dominicain, l’orthodoxe) qui portait dans sa barbe inculte la soupe de la veille et sentait mauvais, de Berdiaev enfin qui entrecoupait ses exposés de tics monstrueux. Il introduisait non son auriculaire mais son index dans son oreille droite, qu’il secouait avec une force étonnante et il accompagnait ce geste de raclements de gorge puissants, presque insupportables. Cher Berdiaev !<sup>76</sup>

Then, Catherine Baird has established that Berdiaev was at the origins of *Esprit*’s policy towards communism (approving the communist diagnosis of capitalist society, whilst

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<sup>73</sup> He was particularly struck by Augustine’s *Confessions* and Maurice Blondel’s theory of *L’Action*, which presented action as a creative act and an affirmation of being that included contemplative thought. See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 85-93; Christian Roy, ‘Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personnalisme’, in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L’actualité d’un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l’UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 25.

<sup>74</sup> Roy argued: ‘Même les éléments de son personnalisme qui doivent le plus à l’Occident ne sont souvent pas dépourvus de précédent russe dont il ait été familier.’ P.78, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 62-4, 77-8.

<sup>75</sup> See Philip Boobbyer, *S.L. Frank. The life and work of a Russian philosopher, 1877-1950* (Athens, Ohio, 1995), 60-71.

<sup>76</sup> In Jean Jardin to Rougemont, 8 Sept. 1976, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel (BPUN), Rougemont Papers. This letter was accompanying a book by Berdiaev, present from Jardin to Rougemont for his seventieth birthday. Marc did not actually become Catholic until September 1933.

rejecting atheism and the communist state).<sup>77</sup> Before Baird, the French personalist historian and theologian Olivier Clément had claimed that Berdiaev had shaped Emmanuel Mounier's attitude towards communism, his views of history, and his plans to '*Refaire la Renaissance*' – following Berdiaev's *Nouveau Moyen Age* (1924).<sup>78</sup> In the 1930s, Berdiaev made Russian personalism known to French personalists, and *vice versa*. In the following section, I shall seek to show how Berdiaev was already linked with the origins of 'French' personalism in the 1920s.

Finally, German philosophy was also central. According to Roy, Marc borrowed the very term 'personalism' from Max Scheler, the founder of 'ethical personalism' in Germany.<sup>79</sup> In *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (whose subtitle already bore the name 'personalism': *Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*), Scheler held the 'personalist' view that it was impossible to analyse the act separately from the concrete person, and *vice versa*.<sup>80</sup>

Thomas Keller has studied the various transfers between German dialogical personalism and the main French personalisms.<sup>81</sup> German personalism arose from ecumenical milieux, and was marked by biblical inspiration. It is best known through its Jewish representatives, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, who developed a philosophy of dialogue and expressed concerns with human existence. Thus personalism already existed as a philosophy in Germany twenty years before it emerged in France as a movement. However, the German personalism of the 1910s and 1920s only concerned a small number of philosophers (in addition to a few people who would convey the personalist philosophy of Eugen Rosenstock to Resistance groups, such as the Kreisau Circle).<sup>82</sup> The French personalist

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<sup>77</sup> Baird, 'Religious communism? Nicolai Berdyayev's contribution to *Esprit's* interpretation of communism', 29-47.

<sup>78</sup> Olivier Clément, 'Berdiaeff et le personnalisme français', *Contacts*, XXI, 67 (3e trimestre), 205-28; Olivier Clément, *Berdiaev, un philosophe russe en France* (Paris, 1991), 81-123.

<sup>79</sup> Roy, 'Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personnalisme', 23.

<sup>80</sup> See Max Scheler, *Le formalisme en éthique et l'éthique matérielle des valeurs. Essai nouveau pour fonder un personnalisme éthique* (Translated by Maurice de Gandillac, 2nd edn. Paris, 1991).

<sup>81</sup> See Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*.

<sup>82</sup> Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 483.

movements of the 1930s, by contrast, developed a doctrine aimed at a broad social basis and political action.<sup>83</sup>

Long-lasting clichés in personalist historiography will make it necessary to reconsider the sequence of development of the various personalisms in 1930s France.<sup>84</sup> Before all this however, it is necessary to characterize further the concept of personalism. To assert that the personalism that developed in France in the 1930s was borrowed from German philosophy and Russian religious thinking, one presupposes that no such understanding of the person existed in France prior to the introduction of the term. This requires further examination.

## ***2. Senses of the person***

Firstly, it must be remembered that the term person has various senses: classic, grammatical, and ‘ontological’. In France, personalists particularly developed the third sense, whereby personhood has absolute value. Secondly, I show that the emergence of personalism in France brought the contrast between ‘personne’ and ‘individu’ into common parlance. I submit that this contrast may be seen as the crucial tenet of ‘French’ personalism. In the process of appropriating personalism, which was originally a foreign movement, French personalists contrasted it with individualism. Thirdly, I suggest that the term ‘personnalisme’ was adopted in French to avoid the connotations of ‘humanisme’. Lastly, I consider the extent to which their opposition to any systematic definition of the person was a necessary, albeit vulnerable, position.

### **Layers of meaning**

The etymology of the word ‘person’ is complex, and its semantic development uncertain. Maurice Nédoncelle, a Catholic philosopher and a personalist himself, has given a

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<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 4 in particular.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter 3 and 4.

detailed etymology.<sup>85</sup> Suffice here to note that *Πρόσωπον*, the Greek word of which the Latin translation is *persona*, meant not person but face, and it referred to the mask worn by actors in the theatre or to the part they played. These classic roots brought about the modern understanding of the ‘person’ as a character, which implies a sense of a guise, a sense that the person (or personage) is not the ‘real self’.

The classical languages also created the grammatical sense of the term. Grammatically, the ‘person’ designates each of the three classes of personal pronouns, and corresponding distinctions in verbs, denoting or indicating respectively the person speaking (first person), the person spoken to (second person), and the person or thing spoken of (third person).

However, ‘French’ personalism drew principally on a third understanding of the ‘person’, which is radically different from the classic and grammatical senses of the term. For personalists, the person has absolute or ‘ontological’ value. Some twentieth-century theologians have traced it back to the idea that the human being is God-sourced (Genesis 1:27), and more specifically, interpreting the Cappadocian Fathers, that it is the ‘person’ who is made in the image and likeness of a personal God.<sup>86</sup> According to this interpretation, being is traced back not to substance or nature but to person. In a secularised version, the absolute value of personhood moves much of modern Western thought.<sup>87</sup>

In a text written in London during the Second World War, the philosopher and mystic Simone Weil objected to the use of ‘la personne’ as a higher moral reference on the grounds that it could have derogatory connotations, such as in the expression ‘Il met sa personne en

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<sup>85</sup> Maurice Nédoncelle, *Explorations personalistes* (Paris, 1970), 169; Maurice Nédoncelle, ‘Proson et persona dans l’antiquité classique’, *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 22 (1948), 277-99.

<sup>86</sup> The Greek Orthodox personalist theologian, John Zizioulas shows how, from the fourth century onwards, Greek patristic theology gave a radically new meaning to *πρόσωπον* / *persona*. See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York, 1997), 27-65. Historically, this change in the meaning of ‘person’ was the result of the endeavour of the Church to give ‘ontological’ expression to its faith in the Triune God. It involved the re-definition of ‘person’ by equating it with ‘*hypostasis*’, a word that had an ambivalent currency both as individual and as sub-stance.

<sup>87</sup> Consider the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, which defends ‘the [inherent] dignity and worth of the human person’.

avant'.<sup>88</sup> She pointed out that in everyday language, the person was a synonym of personality and self, but not necessarily of the whole human being.<sup>89</sup> She reckoned: 'Il y a dans chaque homme quelque chose de sacré. Mais ce n'est pas sa personne. Ce n'est pas non plus la personne humaine. C'est lui, cet homme tout simplement.'<sup>90</sup> In reference to a random man in the street, she put forward a strong moral position:

Ce n'est ni sa personne ni la personne humaine en lui qui m'est sacrée. C'est lui. Lui tout entier. Les bras, les yeux, les pensées, tout. Je ne porterais atteinte à rien de tout cela sans des scrupules infinis. Si la personne humaine était en lui ce qu'il y a de sacré pour moi, je pourrais facilement lui crever les yeux. Une fois aveugle, il sera une personne humaine exactement autant qu'avant.<sup>91</sup>

Weil objected to the personalist reference to the person as a moral principle, on the ground that: 'Il est impossible de définir le respect de la personne humaine.'<sup>92</sup> She expressed her qualms in the form of a rule that is worth remembering: 'Prendre pour règle de la morale publique une notion impossible à définir et à concevoir, c'est donner passage à toute espèce de tyrannie.'<sup>93</sup> This is a fine critique of personalism. There is a sense in which it applies to all political systems based on public morality.<sup>94</sup>

There is, however, also a sense in which Simone Weil was ignoring the doctrinal efforts of the personalists throughout the 1930s. The human person may not be precisely definable but he or she is nonetheless conceivable. Weil did not allow that one can conceive the person, and yet her defence of the random human in the street recalls the personalist emphasis on the concrete, the singular, and the whole human person. The philosopher Maria Vilella Petit has recently made a convincing case for the misinterpretation of personalists by

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<sup>88</sup> Simone Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', *Ecrits de Londres et dernières lettres* (Paris, 1953), 30.

<sup>89</sup> That there is no distinction between 'person' and 'personality' in Weil's article is clear in the change of title: first published as 'La personnalité humaine, le juste et l'injuste', *La Table ronde*, 36 (Dec. 1950), it was later included in her posthumous essay collection as: Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice'.

<sup>90</sup> Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', 11.

<sup>91</sup> Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', 12.

<sup>92</sup> Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', 12.

<sup>93</sup> Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', 12.

<sup>94</sup> E.g. the concept of human dignity, underlying human rights.

Weil.<sup>95</sup> On the one hand, Simone Weil understood ‘person’, ‘individual’ and ‘personality’ as synonyms (as they often remain in common language), and she reflected upon the Classical etymology of the person (the person as a role, as acting). On the other hand, personalist thinkers referred to the absolute value of the human person, which – sometimes unwittingly for thinkers who claimed to follow Nietzsche – could be traced back to the values of monotheist religions.<sup>96</sup>

Long before personalism emerged in France, Russian personalist thinkers emphasised freedom, knowledge and creativity as potentials inherent in each human person – potentials and not absolutes since the person, as a creature, lacks ontological freedom.<sup>97</sup> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Russian personalists helped enrich the concept of personhood from diverse standpoints, whether religious, secular, or atheist. For instance, Dostoievsky’s novels expressed the conviction that the person is a mystery and the key to the universe.<sup>98</sup> There were direct connections between Russian and French personalism.

The Canadian historian Catherine Baird has argued that, in the late 1920s, Russian émigrés circles were antecedents of French personalism.<sup>99</sup> (Some bridges between Russian and French cultures, such as the ‘Studio franco-russe’, are being further researched).<sup>100</sup> In Russian thought, the contrast between the ‘person’ in (ecclesial) community and the rational

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<sup>95</sup> Maria Villela Petit, 'Personne, droit, droits de l'homme', in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L'actualité d'un grand témoin. Acte du colloque tenu à l'UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 149-50. In the same sense, see the note in Attilio Danese, *Ethique et personalisme* (Louvain la Neuve, 1992), 226.

<sup>96</sup> This was acknowledged with striking intellectual honesty by Alexandre Marc in his homage to Denis de Rougemont, in 1986. It is particularly significant on behalf of Marc, who had been a staunch advocate of non-confessional personalism throughout his life. See Alexandre Marc, 'Vers une lumière qui ne s'éteint jamais', *Nouvelle Revue Neuchâteloise*, 47, special issue: *Denis de Rougemont, de Neuchâtel à l'Europe* (Autumn 1995), 64-71.

<sup>97</sup> See ‘Le personalisme russe’, in Tomas Spidlik, *L’Idée Russe. Une autre vision de l’homme* (Troyes, 1994), 24-6.

<sup>98</sup> On Dostoievsky and the person, see esp. Paul Evdokimov, *Gogol et Dostoïevsky ou la descente aux enfers* (Bruges, 1961), 192.

<sup>99</sup> Baird, 'Le Cercle oecuménique (1926-1930): An antecedent of French personalism among Russian émigrés', 151-75.

<sup>100</sup> Animated by Vsevolod De Vogt and Robert Sébastien, the ‘Studio franco-russe’ allowed important contacts between the Russian diaspora and French artists between 1929 and 1932. See esp. Philippe Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)* (Paris, 1999), 172-3. It may be possible that this was another point of contact between Russian and French personalisms.

‘individual’ being may be traced back to Alexis Khomiakov (1804-1860).<sup>101</sup> Following the Russian Revolution, Russian émigrés to Western Europe brought with them a concern for the person in communion. The audience that Russian émigrés reached varied greatly depending upon the countries in which they settled. Among the Russian thinkers who managed to win a kind of authority in German-, French- and English-speaking circles, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) and Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) were possibly the most successful.<sup>102</sup>

Nikolai Berdiaev is particularly interesting as a cultural bridge-builder. Having settled in the Paris area in 1924, with the support of Stanislas Fumet and his wife, Berdiaev rapidly entered the Meudon circle of Jacques Maritain, where he became relatively influential.<sup>103</sup> The idea of defining the ‘personne’ as the true being went hand in hand with a denigration of the abstract, dry, rationalist, selfish ideas of nineteenth century positivism. Let us see how the concern with the ‘personne’ as the concrete, altruistic, creative, and finally Christian attitude emerged in the wake of Jacques Maritain, Nikolai Berdiaev, and the Franco-Russian theologico-philosophical circles which they held at their homes in Meudon (from 1923) and Clamart (between 1929 and 1932).

## **Person / individual**

The crucial tenet defining ‘personnalisme’ in France is, I shall argue, the contrast between ‘personne’ and ‘individu’. On the one hand, the ‘individu’ designates the human being in the abstract or in his or her attempt to function independently from others (the atomised being). On the other hand, the ‘personne’ is the relational being, in contact or communion with others (including God and the angels for believers). Today, this contrast has

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<sup>101</sup> I owe this information to Prof. Andrew Louth.

<sup>102</sup> On Berdiaev’s contacts with French philosophers, see his own testimony: Nicolas Berdiaev, *Essai d'autobiographie spirituelle* (Translated by E. Belenson. Paris, 1958), 332-49. On the role of Soloviev among Catholic theologians, see Chenu, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 164-5.

<sup>103</sup> See esp. Clément, *Berdiaev, un philosophe russe en France*, 110.



become common in French. It has been attributed, quite rightly, to the influence of French personalist and Catholic philosophy, in particular to the journal *Esprit*.<sup>104</sup>

In 1938, the Abbé Jean Plaquevent published a long note in *Esprit* contrasting the history of the ideas of ‘individu’ and ‘personne’.<sup>105</sup> Plaquevent was not himself a personalist, but he was the confessor of several young personalists. He claimed to give a distanced account. Plaquevent rejected ‘individualisme’ as an equivalent of egoism.<sup>106</sup> He implied that personalism could be the ‘doctrine de l’un et du divers’, which humankind had been longing for since Antiquity, and more and more desperately since the sixteenth century. Personalism was a call for complexity and altruism. A personalist would recognise that rather than attempting to classify people into the theoretical categories of ‘individu’ and ‘personne’, it is more fruitful to recognise that ‘individu’ and ‘personne’ constitute two poles within each man and woman – *Esprit* published a special issue stating: ‘La femme aussi est une personne’ [sic.] in June 1936. Thus, ‘personnalisme’ sought ways of becoming the person whom one ultimately is, rather than the egocentric individual one tends to remain.

In 1938 already, the contrast between ‘personne’ and ‘individu’ was said to be clichéd (‘tarte à la crème’).<sup>107</sup> In those terms, the distinction was quite new however. The first time the distinction between ‘personne’ and ‘individu’ was made in French was in 1925, in Jacques Maritain’s polemical essay *Trois réformateurs* (1925).<sup>108</sup> Whether Maritain uncovered a theory which was already present in Aquinas – as he maintained – or whether he called on Aquinas to develop his own theory has led to debate in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>109</sup> Maritain was

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<sup>104</sup> Alain Laurent has spoken of a ‘deuxième “Sainte-Alliance” contre l’individu’, referring in particular to personalism and to the thinking of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in Alain Laurent, *L’Individu et ses ennemis* (Paris, 1987).

<sup>105</sup> Jean Plaquevent, ‘Individu et personne. Esquisse historique des notions’, *Esprit*, 64, 578-609.

<sup>106</sup> Plaquevent, ‘Individu et personne. Esquisse historique des notions’, 609.

<sup>107</sup> Plaquevent, ‘Individu et personne. Esquisse historique des notions’, 578-9.

<sup>108</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Trois réformateurs: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (Paris, 1925), see analysis in Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*, 123-5.

<sup>109</sup> Some Thomists, such as the Canadian philosopher Charles De Koninck, find specious the distinction between person and individual that Maritain drew from Aquinas, see Charles de Koninck, *De la Primauté du bien commun contre les personnalistes: le principe de l’Ordre Nouveau* (Québec, 1943). Others argue that Maritain’s personalism was grounded in Aquinas’s notion of individuality and person, see Jacques Croteau, *Les Fondements thomistes du personnalisme de Maritain* (Ottawa, 1955). I owe this information to Christian Roy.

at the centre of a neo-Thomist movement, which, interpreted and appropriated Aquinas with the aim of promoting an attitude different from the positivism and individualism of the nineteenth century.

The Meudon circle, meeting at Maritain's home since 1923, was one of the most important intellectual gatherings of interwar France.<sup>110</sup> The Meudon circle is famous for having contributed to a wave of conversions of intellectuals to Catholicism around 1925.<sup>111</sup> Its aim was to bring into play reason and faith, philosophy and theology, metaphysics, poetry, politics, at one and the same time.<sup>112</sup> The Meudon circle was also at the origins of Plon's 'Roseau d'or', both a journal and a series designed as 'une réplique à la NRF'.<sup>113</sup> Maritain's *Trois réformateurs* was its first publication.

In the mid-1920s, the 'Roseau d'or' also published Berdiaev's *Un nouveau Moyen Age* (vol.13); Henri Massis's *Défense de l'Occident* (vol.16); and Maritain's *Primauté du spirituel* (vol.19). Massis was an Action Française militant, Berdiaev a former Marxist and unconventional Russian Orthodox thinker, and Maritain motivated his rejection of Action Française in *Primauté du spirituel* (May 1927). While each of these essays had a different political stance, they shared the project to 'refaire la personne humaine' from a Christian standpoint. This was the context in which the distinction between 'personne' and 'individu' appeared.

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<sup>110</sup> It gathered lay people (such as Paul Claudel, Max Jacob, Jean Cocteau, François Mauriac, Marc Chagall, Robert Vallery-Radot) and priests, especially the Abbé Lallement and Father Garrigou-Lagrange. The bibliography on the Meudon circle is abundant; among the latest publications, see Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 60-8; Nicolas Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française* (Paris, 2001), 59-81.

<sup>111</sup> However, Frédéric Gugelot has noted: 'Si le groupe dont le cœur bat à Meudon est central, pour autant il ne s'y résume pas.' Frédéric Gugelot, *La conversion des intellectuels au catholicisme en France (1885-1935)* (Paris, 1998), 45. Julien Green wrote down his opinion on these conversions, which put him ill-at-ease, in Julien Green, *Oeuvres complètes, Journal* (Pléiade. vol. 4. Paris, 1975), 11-12.

<sup>112</sup> See Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks* (Translated by Joseph W. Evans. Albany, New York, 1984), 135.

<sup>113</sup> Stanislas Fumet to Jacques Maritain, Oct. 1924, quoted in Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 68.

Véronique Auzépy-Chavagnac has claimed that, with his *Trois réformateurs*, Maritain initiated a right-wing and Thomist personalism.<sup>114</sup> However, we shall see that Maritain was suspicious of ‘le personnalisme’ in the 1930s.<sup>115</sup> Maritain only used the term ‘personnalisme’ for his own works in the 1940s, after a long journey to American democracy.<sup>116</sup> When Maritain elaborated *Humanisme intégral* (1936), dealing with the ‘Problemas espirituales y temporales de una nueva Cristiandad’ (the original Spanish title of these lectures given at the University of Santander), he apologized that ‘le mot humanisme est un vocable ambigu’.<sup>117</sup> ‘Personnalisme’ conveniently replaced ‘humanisme’, a term loaded with contradictory connotations.

## Personalism / humanism

In 1903, the French philosopher Charles Renouvier published a book entitled *Le Personnalisme*. However, Renouvier’s neo-Kantian philosophy has not initiated a school. Claims that Renouvier initiated French personalism have either been misled by the homonymy, or were deceptively attempting to give a French pedigree to a movement that was originally foreign.<sup>118</sup> When Renouvier published his *Personnalisme*, the *Nouveau Larousse Illustré*, which was arguably the most popular dictionary in France, defined ‘personnalisme’ as: ‘action de tout rapporter à soi; vice de celui qui ne s’inquiète que de sa personne’.<sup>119</sup> One has to wait until the 1930s to see a radical change in the meaning of ‘personnalisme’: previously synonym to egoism, it now connotes altruism and humanity.

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<sup>114</sup> Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*. The question of right-wing personalism will be considered in Chapter 3.

<sup>115</sup> See Chapter 3 in particular.

<sup>116</sup> See esp. Jacques Maritain, *La Personne et le bien commun* (Paris, 1946), 8-9.

<sup>117</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme intégral* (Paris, 1936), 10.

<sup>118</sup> For instance in André Devaux, ‘Personnalisme’, *Catholicisme hier, aujourd’hui, demain: Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1986), 22-30. Paul Guilluy’s definition of the ‘Personne (Philosophie et théologie)’ (in the same issue p.30-54) is an apology of the communitarian personalism of *Esprit*, which will be studied in Chapter 3.

<sup>119</sup> In *Nouveau Larousse Illustré*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1903), 806.

The success of the term ‘personnalisme’ in 1930s France can be explained by the need of a new concept to criticize positivism, individualism, and rationalism. The search for a new humanism was a chief intellectual concern in 1930s Europe.<sup>120</sup> However, humanism – in the Feuerbachian sense ‘man is God’ – repelled believers; and romanticism – another option for criticizing rationalism – was too closely associated with the nineteenth century.

One may illustrate the search for a new humanism through the example of Denis de Rougemont. In 1930, the Protestant journal *Foi et vie* launched an interdenominational survey ‘*Pour un humanisme nouveau*’, which gathered the answers of Jacques Maritain, Léon Brunschvicg, the Abbé Henri Brémond (from the Académie française), and others.<sup>121</sup> Denis de Rougemont, aged twenty-four, was one of the youngest contributors. He condemned the idea of a new humanism, following the common assumption that humanism, as the religion of Humanity, was incompatible with transcendence.<sup>122</sup> Bruno Ackermann was right to suggest that ‘cet article constitue sans doute la clé de l’orientation théologique que prendra la pensée de Rougemont’.<sup>123</sup> Rougemont aimed, like many believers, at reconciling the absolute demands of the spiritual world with the realities of human life. However, it was only after his encounter with personalist thinkers, in particular Alexandre Marc and Nikolai Berdiaev (in 1931-2) that Rougemont came to see ‘le personnalisme’ as a means of overcoming the opposition between Humanism and Christianity, without confusing the two.

It is significant that Rougemont’s first plea in favour of the ON group, ‘Cause commune’ published in the spring of 1932, was disguised as a letter to the Swiss editor of *Présence*, Gilbert Trolliet, who called for a fresh interpretation of humanism.<sup>124</sup> Reacting to

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<sup>120</sup> For example, see the debates organised by the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Budapest in June 1936: ‘Vers un nouvel humanisme’, esp. the interventions by Thomas Mann, Budapest 8-11 June 1936, quoted in Jean-Jacques Renoliet’s thesis ‘L’institut international de coopération intellectuelle (1919-1940)’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Paris I, 1995), 836-7. Published as Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L’UNESCO oubliée: la Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle, 1919-1946* (Paris, 1999).

<sup>121</sup> Survey edited by Paul Arbousse-Bastide, *Pour un humanisme nouveau, Cahiers de Foi et vie*, Apr. 1930.

<sup>122</sup> ‘Etre véritablement homme, c’est avoir accès au divin. Que sert de parler d’humanisme « chrétien » ? L’humanisme est de l’homme, le christianisme est du nouvel homme. Tout humanisme véritable conduit « au seuil » : et qu’irions-nous lui demander de plus, s’il laisse en blanc la place de Dieu.’ Denis de Rougemont, ‘Réponse à l’enquête “Pour un humanisme nouveau”’, *Cahiers de Foi et vie*, special issue (1930), 245.

<sup>123</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 179.

<sup>124</sup> Gilbert Trolliet, ‘Autour d’un humanisme en marche’, *Présence*, 1 (Jan. 1932).

Trollet's study, 'Autour de l'Humanisme en marche', Rougemont claimed to have found 'la cause commune de la jeunesse européenne'.<sup>125</sup> The idea of a common cause of European youth came from the ON discussions, which Rougemont had been attending in Paris, since the autumn 1931.<sup>126</sup> His article expressed the idea, developed during ON meetings, that European youth shared the aim of a humane and spiritual revolution.

Thus, Rougemont claimed to answer the dilemma 'Humanisme, ou Révolution' on behalf of his 'génération révolutionnaire'.<sup>127</sup> European youth, according to Rougemont, was both revolutionary and concerned with human existence. It was revolutionary, regardless of ideological backgrounds: 'Les uns viennent de Marx, les autres de Proudhon, de Hegel ou de Kierkegaard, de la Raison sous ses formes violentes et créatrices, ou de la Foi.'<sup>128</sup> This range of sources fitted the non-confessional composition of ON. European youth was also concerned with transcending the futility of mechanical existence. Hence the motto: '*défense de l'homme total contre tout ce qui tend à le mécaniser, à le disqualifier, à le châtrer de toute violence spirituelle et créatrice.*'<sup>129</sup>

Personalism (still unknown under this name) would combine Humanism and Revolution in order defend human beings in all their wholeness. It was necessary, therefore, to maintain the identity between thought and action, and to organise society and economy according to this principle.<sup>130</sup> Identity between thought and action ('Faites ce que vous pensez, pensez ce que vous faites') contrasted bourgeois hypocrisy ('Faites comme tout-le-monde, et pensez ce que vous n'oserez jamais faire').<sup>131</sup> Rougemont's views recalled –

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<sup>125</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Cause commune', *Présence*, 2 (April-June 1932), 13.

<sup>126</sup> ON organised 'des séances publiques [...] et des séances privées, strictement limitées à l'étude pratique et détaillée des points principaux du programme de l'Ordre Nouveau.', in 'Centre d'études de l'Ordre Nouveau', *Plans*, Nov. 1932, 152.

<sup>127</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 12. See Chapter 4 for further analysis of the situation in 1932.

<sup>128</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 13.

<sup>129</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 13.

<sup>130</sup> Rougemont called for: 'l'identité nécessaire de la pensée et de l'action' and 'l'effort d'instaurer une économie générale de la vie impliquant cette identité', Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 13.

<sup>131</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 13.

Marxist sympathies aside – Emmanuel Berl's *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise* (1929) and *Mort de la morale bourgeoise* (1930).

In 'Cause commune,' Rougemont gave but one concrete example of the manifestation of the common front of European youth: 'Le congrès de Francfort' (February 1932) was supposed to reveal a unity between European revolutionary movements.<sup>132</sup> The Frankfurt Congress has been the object of several recent historical studies.<sup>133</sup> The conclusion of these studies was already clear in 1932: the French organisers failed in their objective to foster transnational dialogue between European movements open to a federalist perspective.<sup>134</sup>

Apart from the Frankfurt Congress (which was a failure), Rougemont's 'communauté d'attitude essentielle' remained vague – or admittedly limited to his Parisian friends: 'je ne parle ici à peu près que d'amis, parisiens au surplus'.<sup>135</sup> Rougemont mentioned writers from ON (Arnaud Dandieu, Robert Aron, Alexandre Marc, and René Dupuis); Georges Izard and Emmanuel Mounier, who would launch *Esprit* later in 1932; and Thierry Maulnier, an unorthodox Action Française (AF) sympathiser.<sup>136</sup> In 1932, Maulnier was equally anti-

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<sup>132</sup> 'Le congrès de Francfort organisé par *Plans* a révélé cette unité fondamentale que créent en nous non pas des maîtres ni des noms, mais la consternante misère d'une époque où tout ce qu'un homme peut aimer et vouloir se trouve coupé de son origine vivante, flétri, dénaturé, inverti, saboté.' More concretely: 'Février 1932. Pour la constitution d'un front unique des groupements révolutionnaires allemands (tant *Nazis* que communistes), français et belges. Des délégués suisses y assistèrent, ainsi qu'un délégué fasciste.', in Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 13-14. Rougemont would repeat exactly the same formula, from 'la consternante misère [...]' to '[...] saboté.' in the introduction to the 'Cahier de revendications', Denis de Rougemont, 'Cahier de Revendications (Présentation)', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 231 (1 Dec. 1932). See Chapter 4.

<sup>133</sup> Rougemont attended, together with a hundred delegates of various 'third-way movements' from Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland (although Marc later remembered that Rougemont had preferred the Frankfurt Carnival to the conferences). On the Frankfurt Congress, see Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 137; Barbara Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les Français ou l'envers de la collaboration* (Paris, 2001), 37-8; Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 301-4.

<sup>134</sup> See *Plans*, 12 (Feb. 1932), 118-21. To the Germans, European 'federalism' was to express the cooperation of ethnically homogeneous nation-states; to the French organizers, by contrast, the European federal state was to be an heterogeneous body politic, composed of various independent regions. Thus, there could be no common political objective.

<sup>135</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune', 14.

<sup>136</sup> Jacques Talagrand – alias Thierry Maulnier –, born in 1909, a fellow student of Robert Brasillach at Ecole Normale Supérieure, would become a leading figure of the 'Jeune Droite' in the 1930s. See Etienne de Montety, *Thierry Maulnier* (Paris, 1994). In the 1920s, Maulnier's literary tastes were close to the avant-garde, and like Rougemont he studied the *NRF*, particularly liked Malraux and Marcel Arland. At the turn of the 1930s, Maulnier's concerns remained more literary than political, and his writings bore no trace of the chauvinism or anti-semitism of the disciples of Maurras. Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 139-41.

communist and anti-fascist, whilst opposing parliamentary democracy.<sup>137</sup> This list of Rougemont's Parisian friends constituted the hard core group of 'non-conformistes des années trente'.<sup>138</sup>

Rougemont's article had unexpected repercussions in France: after reading *Présence*, Jean Paulhan, the editor of the *NRF*, asked Rougemont to collect the claims of 'la jeunesse révolutionnaire' in France.<sup>139</sup> This is well known since the late 1960s.<sup>140</sup> Yet Paulhan's reservations, which have been left out, are worth quoting: 'il me semble que vous entendez par « révolution » trop de choses, ou trop peu. Quant à « humanisme »...vous m'accorderez bien que c'est surtout ce qui dépasse l'homme qui vous intéresse. Alors pourquoi reprendre des mots qui ont tant (et si mal) servi.'<sup>141</sup> Thereafter, personalism would conveniently replace humanism, to express the quest for a 'revolutionary' philosophy of existence.

## Person / system

In the 1920s, German personalists were overtaken by *Existenz* philosophy. In France however, the development of personalism coexisted with the progress of various philosophies of existence. All participated in the same philosophical movement, which, from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, arose as a backlash against philosophical and scientific systems, treating particulars (especially humans) as members of a genus or instances of universal laws. Thus, personalist philosophies, whether Russian, German, or French, participated in the

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<sup>137</sup> Maulnier viewed fascism (in the broad sense) as the paroxysm of capitalism or, as he put it, the discipline of the barracks combined with that of the factory. Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 204-13.

<sup>138</sup> Maulnier, like all the others, denounced the 'crisis of civilisation' from a 'spiritual' point of view (spiritual being understood in a broad sense: Maulnier himself was an agnostic). See Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 347.

<sup>139</sup> Paulhan wrote to Rougemont: 'Ne serait-il pas intéressant de réunir pour un numéro spécial de la *NRF* toutes sortes de revendications dont il s'agit, de Th. Maulnier à Dandieu ? Accepteriez-vous de vous en charger, de présenter les témoignages, de conclure ? Cela pourrait être assez intéressant, je crois, peut-être assez grave.', Paulhan to Rougemont (from Port-Cros), 30 Sept. 1932, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel (B.P.U.N.), Rougemont papers, Correspondance.

<sup>140</sup> Rougemont reproduced Paulhan's letter in Denis de Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque* (Paris, 1968), 96. See also Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 171n1.

<sup>141</sup> Paulhan to Rougemont (from Port-Cros), 30 Sept. 1932, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel (B.P.U.N.), Rougemont papers, Correspondance.

‘existentialist’ turn, whereby one holds that being cannot be grasped in systems (as in German idealism or positivism).

It is an ‘existentialist’ and ‘personalist’ contention that all systems, in their deterministic cast, conceal from us the highly personal task of trying to achieve self-fulfilment in our lives. In this view, the very term personalism (or existentialism for that matter) is criticisable: to connect the person with an ‘-ism’, with a system, is to conjoin two terms which are contradictory. This criticism is not new. For example, the philosopher of existence Gabriel Marcel rejected both ‘existentialisme’ and ‘personnalisme’ on those grounds.<sup>142</sup> As an alternative, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who was involved in *Esprit* since his youth, preferred to avoid or bury the term personalism in later years.<sup>143</sup> Thereby, he aimed at revivifying the reflection on the person as an ‘attitude’.<sup>144</sup> However, this attitude is of little help to the intellectual historian.

One cannot ignore the fact that there was an important movement which claimed the name personalism, and this movement developed a variety of literature in a style which ‘personalism’ signals. Perhaps personalism can be understood as an oxymoron (an expression self-contradictory or absurd in its literal meaning, but involving a point).<sup>145</sup> In 1934, the French philosopher Maurice Blondel went beyond the denigration of the ‘-isme’ of ‘personnalisme’, to acknowledge the potential of ‘la personne’ (if defined accurately) for the critique of individualism, socialism, and fascism.<sup>146</sup> Personalism was one ‘-ism’ in competition with others, most of which were loosely structured (humanism, materialism, collectivism, fascism, and so on).

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<sup>142</sup> See esp. Gabriel Marcel, *Existentialisme chrétien: Gabriel Marcel* (Paris, 1947), 197-8, 229-31.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne (je pourrais aussi dire : meure le personnalisme, sous entendant : qu’il meure, même si... ; peut-être vaut-il mieux qu’il meure, pour que...).’, in Ricoeur, ‘Préface’, in Emmanuel Mounier, *Ecrits sur le personnalisme*, 7.

<sup>144</sup> See Ricoeur, ‘Préface’, in Emmanuel Mounier, *Ecrits sur le personnalisme*, 7-14.

<sup>145</sup> I thank Christian Roy for suggesting this image.

<sup>146</sup> Maurice Blondel, ‘Les équivoques du "personnalisme"', *Politique*, 3 (Mars 1934), esp. 194-6, 198, 204-5. The emphasis is mine.



In the competition with other ‘-isms’, personalism had both assets and handicaps. Both, it appears, originated in the concept of person. Personalists held a difficult position philosophically because their definition of the person remained imprecise, partly voluntarily, partly because they were not philosophically minded writers. Contemporaries noticed this. In 1934 already, the philosophers Paul Archambault and Maurice Blondel expressed reservations vis-à-vis the new personalist doctrine on the grounds that the slogan ‘Primauté de la personne’ was elusive.<sup>147</sup> Archambault observed that ‘la faiblesse du nouveau “personnalisme” est de manquer d’une philosophie’, for lack of a shared understanding of ‘la personne’.<sup>148</sup> He made a significant exception for the ON group: ‘Avec *La Révolution nécessaire*, avec les six numéros à cette heure parus de la revue *L’Ordre Nouveau*, on sait à quoi s’en tenir, on se trouve en face d’un ensemble de réactions et d’affirmations qui offrent une prise ferme à l’analyse et à la critique’.<sup>149</sup> The ON group strove for a precise and non-religious political philosophy.

Nevertheless, ON tended to avoid definition of the person in its doctrinal texts.<sup>150</sup> Some imprecision was residual in the definition of the person. To most personalists, it is more likely that the person be grasped in intuition, in works of art, or in divine revelation than in a set of concepts, or rational definitions, with the result that personalism finds its most fertile expression in art, literature, religion and theology.<sup>151</sup> ON is an exception.

The difficulty of defining the person was aggravated for the non-confessional branches of personalism, notably the ON group. By avoiding religious references, they avoided making the inherent dignity of each person depend on the Bible (the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God). To avoid making the person depend on a profession of faith had important advantages for believers and non-believers alike. The aim was a universal

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<sup>147</sup> Paul Archambault, 'Destin d'un mot', *Politique*, 2 (Feb. 1934), 155-65; Blondel, 'Les équivoques du "personnalisme"', 193-205.

<sup>148</sup> Archambault, 'Destin d'un mot', 163.

<sup>149</sup> Archambault, 'Destin d'un mot', 156.

<sup>150</sup> There is no definition of the person in the special issue ‘Nous voulons... L’Ordre Nouveau’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), definitions pages I-IV.

<sup>151</sup> The personalist theologian Vladimir Lossky once wrote: ‘quand nous disons « c’est du Mozart » ou « c’est du Rembrandt », nous nous trouvons chaque fois dans un univers personnel qui n’a son équivalent nulle part.’ Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l’Eglise d’Orient* (Paris, 1990), 52. (Original edn. 1944).

political doctrine and a united Europe. Moreover, for the believers, perhaps either tolerance or understanding between Christian confessions with the beginning of the ecumenical movement motivated a non-confessional line.

In sum, this chapter has sought to show why personalism stands for complexity. It was concerned with the whole of the human person – a multifaceted and contradictory concept by nature. Personalism addressed the problem of the relationship of the individual with the collective. It was a political philosophy reliant on the innovations of a young generation partly, but also on renewal and reinterpretation of old concepts, and perhaps most heavily on cultural transfers from German and Russian philosophy. The idea of personalism was the result of invention, renewal, and transfer. Part I will show how various personalist movements developed, Part II will focus on political philosophy.

## PART I: ROUGEMONT AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN PERSONALIST MOVEMENTS

The portrait of the writer as a mediator was an image that Denis de Rougemont applied to Goethe in 1932.<sup>152</sup> As often when an author describes the aims of another writer, Rougemont said more about his own concerns than about Goethe. To study Goethe was, for Rougemont, to transcend national boundaries and to fight mass nationalism. Rougemont concluded: 'C'est pourquoi notre tâche – que Goethe eût approuvée – reste de fédérer des *différences authentiques*, et non pas d'uniformiser des médiocrités décolorées. L'harmonie d'un tableau naît de l'opposition des tons : c'est une harmonie fédérale.'<sup>153</sup> Federating genuine differences would be at the core of Rougemont's political and literary endeavours throughout his life.<sup>154</sup>

Looking back upon his youth in 1968, Rougemont explained his position in the 1930s as a triple allegiance: a commitment to *L'Ordre Nouveau*, to *Esprit*, and to the young Barthian journal *Hic et Nunc*. He asserted:

Cette triple allégeance m'assurait à la fois la liberté et plusieurs possibilités complémentaires de participer, de m'engager, voire d'assurer ces tâches pratiques dont j'ai toujours eu le goût et le besoin. Elle m'obligeait à vérifier ou rétablir sans cesse la cohérence de mes options théologiques, philosophiques et politiques. Et elle me permettait surtout de ne pas me laisser emprisonner dans les « disciplines de vote » qui tendent très vite à s'instaurer dans de tels groupes. Du même coup, j'échappais à la tendance inverse, le scissionnisme.<sup>155</sup>

This statement is true in the sense that Rougemont did mediate between various poles of intellectual debate throughout the 1930s. And this may indeed have encouraged him to

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<sup>152</sup> See Rougemont's contribution to the 'Décades de Pontigny', 8-18 Sept. 1932: Denis de Rougemont, 'Goethe médiateur', *Union pour la vérité*, 3-4 (Dec. 1932-Jan. 1933). Also in Denis de Rougemont, *Les Personnes du drame* (2nd edn. Neuchâtel, 1945), 41-9.

<sup>153</sup> 'Goethe médiateur', (Sept. 1932) in Rougemont, *Les Personnes du drame*, 49.

<sup>154</sup> Rougemont's federative role, both in the 1930s and in the European federalist movements after 1945, has been pointed out by Balmand, 'Denis de Rougemont'.

<sup>155</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 98.

formulate a particularly coherent personalism, in theological, philosophical, and political terms. However, Rougemont's presentation as being 'above the fray' must be read with a critical eye. Rougemont's trajectory was not as impartial as he claimed. In this particular instance, Ackermann's interpretation of Rougemont's 'non-private diaries' (*Journaux non-intimes*) may have lacked critical distance.<sup>156</sup> In Chapters 3 and 4, I argue that Rougemont was a mediator not in the sense of a neutral arbiter between different groups, but as a militant, convinced of the necessity to federate personalists in view of the personalist revolution. Before all this however, Chapter 2 unfolds Denis de Rougemont's Swiss, Protestant, and literary background.

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<sup>156</sup> See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 249-581.

## Chapter 2. French Swiss connection

Before 1931, Denis de Rougemont could not be personalist: he had never heard of personalism. He only joined the ‘French’ personalist movement in 1931-2. One may ask why, then, start this study of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont with his Swiss childhood and youth? A personalist (or simply biographical) answer may be given: it would be impossible to understand his personalism without having an idea of the kind of person he was. Rougemont was born into a pastor’s family of the Canton of Neuchâtel. This shaped his life-long concern for morals and theology. It is also important to remember that, from a young age, Rougemont’s ambition was to be a writer: this explains his literary (rather than philosophical) style. Moreover, it is also significant that Rougemont was a Swiss who looked towards Paris for literary approval. His ambivalent attitude vis-à-vis Switzerland, defined in the 1920s, would not change significantly in the 1930s. Lastly, his moral or ‘existential’ concerns were crucial to his role in 1930s literature. He was one of the first writers to introduce Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth in French, and his theological and ‘existential’ concerns explain much of his support for personalism.

Ackermann has given us a detailed biography of Denis de Rougemont up till 1946; François Saint-Ouen and others have provided an overview of his entire life.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, the biographical account remains concise here. Only contentious points in the latest historiography are developed.<sup>158</sup> Patrick Leuzinger has written a thesis claiming to find the essentials of Rougemont’s political commitment in his essay *Les Méfaits de l’instruction publique* (1929). Leuzinger contradicts Ackermann, for whom Rougemont was not interested in politics before he moved to Paris in 1930. This will lead me to insist on the fact that Rougemont’s writings – mainly reviews, articles, and the essay mentioned – bear no trace of

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<sup>157</sup> For a brief biography, see 'Denis de Rougemont', *Cadmos*, 33, Special issue (Spring 1986), 127-36.

<sup>158</sup> Regarding Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*; Patrick Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral' (Mémoire pour l'obtention du diplôme de la Faculté de Lettres, University of Geneva, Institut européen, 1996). For the question of ‘fascism’ see Chapter 6.

serious political commitment, nor of personalism in the 1920s.<sup>159</sup> After moving to Paris in 1930, Rougemont became involved in politics (like so many writers at the time).

We turn first to Rougemont's Swiss Protestant background, his formation in Switzerland and first publications; next his move to Paris in 1930; and finally, to the 'existential' and theological questions, which were to shape the particularity of Rougemont's personalism. This chapter suggests that Rougemont's beginnings in the personalist movement expressed literary ambitions and moral concerns, more than political or economic projects.

## **1. Swiss and Protestant**

The history of the Rougemont family is intertwined with that of the Canton of Neuchâtel, which is in turn intertwined in European history. So Denis de Rougemont claimed in his *Suite neuchâteloise* (1948).<sup>160</sup> Published for the anniversary of the Republic of Neuchâtel, and soon after Rougemont's father's death, *Suite neuchâteloise* fulfils the double purpose of reflecting upon the Republic of Neuchâtel in a shattered Europe, and of exploring the roots of the Rougemont family.<sup>161</sup> Towards the end of his life, Rougemont repeatedly emphasised the dual roots of his family, grounded both in Neuchâtel and in the broader European scene.<sup>162</sup> His first biographer, Mary-Jo Deering (who was drawing on her interviews with Rougemont somewhat uncritically) read his family origins as a sign of Rougemont's destiny to fight both for independent regions and European unity.<sup>163</sup> Reading back Rougemont's European commitment in his early years is tempting, but the reality was quite different. Bruno Ackermann has shown that, before 1930, Rougemont had no political

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<sup>159</sup> In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Rougemont published a few poems in young French Swiss reviews (*La Revue de Belles-Lettres*, *Les Cahiers de l'Anglore* and *Présence*). See esp. Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 125-35.

<sup>160</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise* (Neuchâtel, 1948).

<sup>161</sup> The Republic of Neuchâtel was proclaimed by the people in 1848.

<sup>162</sup> See notably his 'Histoire orale', interview of Denis de Rougemont, 14 Jan. 1978, pages 1-6, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 125-6.

<sup>163</sup> Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 125.

commitment, but the will to be a writer.<sup>164</sup> To set the scene for what follows, it is necessary to know Rougemont as a Neuchâtelois.

## Neuchâtel

The Rougemont family, ‘une famille parmi d’autres, et qui n’a guère cherché d’illustration en dehors des limites de la communauté qu’elle a servie pendant cinq siècles’, was rooted in the Neuchâtel region since the fourteenth century.<sup>165</sup> It received a ‘reconnaissance d’ancienne noblesse’ from the Prussian King Frederick II in 1784.<sup>166</sup> The Rougemonts specialised in civil service, and thus it was Denis’s great-great-grandfather, the Attorney-General Georges de Rougemont, who signed the acts of adhesion to the Swiss Confederation in 1815.<sup>167</sup> Then came Denis’s grandfather, a theologian and pastor, and his father Georges-Arthur, a pastor.<sup>168</sup> To Denis, his father exemplified ‘jusque dans ses fonctions ecclésiastiques, l’idée du serviteur de la Cité’, in whom ‘durait toute une race consacrée à la chose publique’.<sup>169</sup> Ultimately, service of the state and the church would amount to the same in his view: ‘Cela fait, au début et à la fin, pas mal de robes et de rabats, soit de justice, soit d’église; et entre temps plus de deux siècles de participation continuelle au gouvernement du pays.’<sup>170</sup> This assimilation may seem curious in a Canton that had strictly kept Calvin’s rule of the separation between church and state.

Returning to the Canton of Neuchâtel in 1905 after four years in a French village, George-Arthur de Rougemont served in the small industrial town of Couvet, in the Val-de-

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<sup>164</sup> See ‘Terreau familial et étudiantin 1906-1930’ and ‘La révolte et ses expressions 1924-1930’, in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, I, 59-152.

<sup>165</sup> Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise*, 35. To know more about the Rougemont family, see *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Suisse* (vol.5, Neuchâtel, 1930); and Jacqueline and Pierre-Arnold Borel, *Les Rougemont de Saint-Aubin* (La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1984)..

<sup>166</sup> ‘Denis de Rougemont’, 127.

<sup>167</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, I, 60.

<sup>168</sup> On Georges de Rougemont, see *Georges de Rougemont, pasteur, textes et témoignages avec un portrait*, (Neuchâtel, 1948).

<sup>169</sup> Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise*, 42-3.

<sup>170</sup> Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise*, 36-7.

Travers, on the heights of Neuchâtel. This post implied an austerity, somewhat offset by the connections of his wife Alice Sophie, née Bovet, a patrician family from Neuchâtel. In a classical gendered interpretation, Denis would call upon his mother's legacy for creativity and romanticism, while he would associate his father with duty and morals.<sup>171</sup> This cleavage was symbolically reinforced by the geography of the Neuchâtel Canton, divided between bottom (*Bas*) and the top (*Haut*), the mild climate of the lake and the plain where the Bovet family lived, and the austere environment of the Val-de-Travers.

Rougemont was born in the Presbytery of Couvet on 8 September 1906. Couvet remains famous for being the birthplace of absinthe, although this reputation was dimmed in 1908, when the liquor was officially banned from Switzerland.<sup>172</sup> Alternatively, 'on pourrait presque dire que Couvet s'est, en un temps, spécialisé dans la fourniture des pasteurs' and this gives an indication of the Protestant character of the town.<sup>173</sup> Couvet was a rural and industrial town. At the time when the Rougemont family lived in Couvet, the town was dominated by the Dubied knitting works. Concern for the working-class led Georges de Rougemont to develop interest in left-wing Christian politics, in particular *Christianisme social*, a movement that developed in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in reaction against the dire consequences of industrialisation.<sup>174</sup> Despite the ban of absinthe, alcoholism remained one of the endemic problems in Couvet. It was a highly controversial issue at the time of George de Rougemont's ministry in Couvet (1905-1919) and throughout Rougemont's youth.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See interview of Denis de Rougemont by Mary-Jo Deering, 14 Jan. 1978, pages 15-17, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 129.

<sup>172</sup> In August 1905, Jean Lanfray, a farmer from the Canton of Vaud and known absinthe drinker, shot his family under the influence of absinthe (and a combination of other spirits, as would become known later). Following the trial and animated public debate, the vote of 6 July 1908 introduced Article 32 in the Federal constitution to ban absinthe.

<sup>173</sup> *La Vie protestante*, 30 mai 1947, quoted by Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, I, 63.

<sup>174</sup> Klauspeter Blaser, *Le Christianisme social, une approche théologique et historique* (Débats (Théologie). Paris, 2002).

<sup>175</sup> The Rougemont family was committed to the fight against alcoholism, in particular through the *Croix-Bleue* association, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, I, 65. See interview of Denis de Rougemont by Mary-Jo Deering, 14 Jan. 1978, pages 19-20, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 128.



Being the son of the pastor in a small town would have meant feeling great pressure to behave in an exemplary way.<sup>176</sup> At a time when the ministry was still exclusively masculine, a pastor's son would have faced the question, implicit or explicit, of whether to perpetuate his father's commitment.<sup>177</sup> Denis de Rougemont kept bad memories of the primary school of Couvet (1913-1918), which he stigmatised in *Les Méfaits de l'instruction publique* (1929).<sup>178</sup> He spent the summer holidays in a large property in Areuse, on the lake of Neuchâtel, on his mother's side.<sup>179</sup> The family finally moved to Areuse in 1919.<sup>180</sup> Denis de Rougemont was educated in Neuchâtel from the age of twelve. As a teenager, he was involved in two types of youth groups: the Protestant youth movement of Neuchâtel, *Unions chrétiennes de jeunes gens*;<sup>181</sup> and the Neuchâtel *Société d'Etude*, for some twenty Gymnase students, which contrasted the Rougemont milieu: it was an explicitly non-religious group.<sup>182</sup>

In the autumn of 1925, Rougemont started a degree in humanities at the University of Neuchâtel, 'la meilleure du monde parce que la plus petite', as he would put it later.<sup>183</sup> It is worth mentioning his classes on modern and medieval literature, both French and German, because they would play a lasting influence on his writings.<sup>184</sup> In particular, the influence of

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<sup>176</sup> See Pierre Péniçon, 'Fils de pasteur', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (June 1986).

<sup>177</sup> Pierre Encrevé, 'Fils de pasteur ou enfants de pasteur(s)', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (June 1986).

<sup>178</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Les Méfaits de l'instruction publique* (1st edn. vol. 1. Lausanne, 1929). See below.

<sup>179</sup> See Rougemont's idyllic memories in Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 129; Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise*, 14. See also Denis de Rougemont, 'Le Grandchamp des Bovet', 1978, typed manuscript, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers.

<sup>180</sup> In this plain near Neuchâtel, which Félix Bovet once called 'la Bovétie', was the Grandchamp hospital and charity, founded by the Bovet family in 1956, and which became a spiritual community in 1935 (with Georges de Rougemont as the first pastor), see Carlo Robert-Grandpierre, 'Grandchamp et Pierre Bovet', in Jean-Marc Barrelet and Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont (eds), *Jean Piaget et Neuchâtel: l'apprenti et le savant* (Lausanne, 1996).

<sup>181</sup> See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 71.

<sup>182</sup> See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 80.

<sup>183</sup> Interview of Denis de Rougemont by Mary-Jo Deering, 27 Feb. 1978, page 1, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 131. There were sixty five regular students in humanities in the first semester 1925-6, when Rougemont entered the University, and ninety in 1929-30, when he graduated.

<sup>184</sup> One may refer to Ackermann for the 'Programme des cours de l'Université de Neuchâtel, 1925-30', Archives de l'Etat de Neuchâtel, Département de l'instruction publique, série Université 380-390, in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 74.

Goethe, Schiller and the German romantics would be noticeable.<sup>185</sup> Besides, it would be impossible to imagine *L'Amour et l'Occident* (1939) without Arthur Piaget's classes on medieval literature, and his presentation of the legend of Tristan and Iseult.<sup>186</sup> Rougemont was introduced to psychology by Arthur Piaget's son, Jean Piaget, famous for his analysis of the evolution of knowledge.<sup>187</sup> Piaget's teachings (particularly that children's logic and modes of thinking are initially entirely different from those of adults) would prove essential to Rougemont's 1929 essay on primary school.<sup>188</sup> Finally, the quasi-systematic etymological approach that Rougemont took throughout his life was probably triggered by his Latin classes, taught by the linguist Max Niedermann.<sup>189</sup>

In Neuchâtel, Rougemont's student activities were organised around the *Société de Belles-Lettres*.<sup>190</sup> The various *Sociétés de Belles-Lettres* of the French speaking cantons published a monthly *Revue de Belles-Lettres*. It was based in Neuchâtel between December 1926 and July 1927, and Rougemont took an active part in it. The journal was largely concerned with the Neuchâtel students, who easily decoded the references to 'les dames', the blind drunk evenings, and the pseudonyms of Topinet or Salomon de Crac (for

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<sup>185</sup> See esp. Rougemont, 'Goethe médiateur', 11-21; Denis de Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube* (Les Cahiers romands, 2e série, 1st edn. vol. 9. Lausanne, 1932); Denis de Rougemont, 'Le silence de Goethe', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 222 (1 March 1932), 480-94.

<sup>186</sup> On Arthur Piaget, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 76.

<sup>187</sup> Jean Piaget (1896-1980), psychologist from Neuchâtel, founder of the field called cognitive development today. His own term for the discipline was 'genetic epistemology', reflecting his philosophical concerns. Among Piaget's most enduring contributions were his robust and surprising observations of children, which Rougemont followed as a student. Piaget taught psychology, sociology and history of science at Neuchâtel from 1925 to 1929. When he took up this post, he had just published *Le Language et la pensée chez l'enfant* (1923) and *Le Jugement et le raisonnement chez l'enfant* (1924).

<sup>188</sup> Rougemont, *Les Méfaits de l'instruction publique*. See analysis below.

<sup>189</sup> Max Niedermann (1874-1954) had been a student of Antoine Meillet, who succeeded Ferdinand de Saussure at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. He taught linguistics, Classics, and Latin, in Basel (1911-25) and in Neuchâtel (1911-44). Cf. *Hommages à Max Niedermann, Collection Latomus* (vol.23, Brussels, 1956), 7-15.

<sup>190</sup> Founded in Lausanne in 1806, this literary institution was the first Swiss student society. In the 1920s, it had headquarters in the main French-speaking universities: Lausanne, Geneva, Neuchâtel and Fribourg. The club recruited exclusively male students with a literary inclination, unlike the more politically oriented *Société de Zofingue*, the other main French Swiss student society. Rougemont entered the Belles-Lettres society of Neuchâtel in December 1925, in his first semester at the University. Being a member of Belles-Lettres was a mark of integration in the Swiss literary field. For his own definition of *Belles-Lettres*, see Denis de Rougemont, 'Essence de Belles-Lettres', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Lausanne)*, 3 (Jan. 1929); Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube*, 200.

Rougemont),<sup>191</sup> Mossoul, Tuty, Fulpius etc. Pseudonyms allowed Rougemont to write about his love life (whether real or imagined), and to express revolt against the family's values.<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the *Revue de Belles-Lettres* does not reveal surprising details: it denotes a lifestyle characteristic of young male bourgeois students in the interwar period.<sup>193</sup> Rougemont reckoned, with hindsight: 'Nous passions des soirées et des nuits que nous imaginions orgiaques, qui étaient simplement lyriques.'<sup>194</sup> It is only a superficial paradox that *Belletrien*s claimed to be revolutionaries – 'Il a y des gens qui n'ont pas encore admis que JEUNESSE = REVOLUTION.'<sup>195</sup> This was part of the romantic ideal.

Romanticism led Rougemont to the University of Vienna in 1927-8. He stated 'Je vins à Vienne pour fuir l'Amérique' (symbol of modernity) and he tried to write romantic and surrealist pieces in Vienna.<sup>196</sup> Afterwards, Rougemont spent the first semester 1928-9 in Geneva, where he took part in the cosmopolitan circles of *La Revue de Genève* and *La Revue européenne*.<sup>197</sup> He then went on to a language course in Calw in Germany in the spring and summer 1929, and having completed his military service in 1929, he took his final

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<sup>191</sup> On Rougemont's use of pseudonyms, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 128.

<sup>192</sup> His affairs are the subject of Christian Campiche, *Denis de Rougemont, Le séducteur de l'Occident* (Chêne-Bourg, 2001). This book is not a serious historical account, but rather a journalist's version of what may have been Rougemont's romantic life. For an imaginary dialogue on seduction or 'petite leçon de météorologie sentimentale', see Salomon de Crac, 'La pluie et le beau temps', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)* (1932), 56-9. For a surrealist praise of drunkenness (contrasting his father's commitment in the Swiss anti-alcoholic league *Croix Bleue*), see Denis de Rougemont, 'Dés ou la clef des champs', *Neuchâtel 1928* (Neuchâtel, 1927), 97-104.

<sup>193</sup> In an article that can also apply to French Swiss youth, Antoine Prost has shown how class and gender shaped categories of accepted behaviour, in Antoine Prost, 'Jeunesse et société dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres', *Vingtième Siècle* (Jan.-March 1987).

<sup>194</sup> Denis de Rougemont, '(Speech of) 11-12 Nov. 1938', *Commémoration de la première académie et centenaire de l'Université* (Neuchâtel, 1939), 11.

<sup>195</sup> Mossoul, 'Adieu au lecteur', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)*, 8 (July 1927), 257.

<sup>196</sup> See esp. the chapter he would later publish in *Le Paysan du Danube* 'Un soir à Vienne avec Gérard' (1928): Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube*, 33-50. (Quote from p.33).

<sup>197</sup> On *La Revue européenne*, see Anne-Lise Delacrétaz and Daniel Maggetti, 'Ecrivains étrangers en Suisse romande', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, III*. (Lausanne, 1998). Robert de Traz particularly appreciated Rougemont's contributions, see Traz to Rougemont, 10 June 1929, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers.

<sup>198</sup> He graduated from Neuchâtel University (Licence in Latin, French and German literature), see his 'Licence', 13 Jan. 1930, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers.

examinations in Neuchâtel in January 1930.<sup>198</sup> Since his teenage years in Neuchâtel, Rougemont seemed determined to become a writer.

## Literary fields

Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the literary field helps to understand the stakes that Rougemont dealt with when hoping to become a writer.<sup>199</sup> As a teenager, Rougemont believed that poetry was the purest type of art, in keeping with the nineteenth-century romantic assumption.<sup>200</sup> In the twentieth century however, poetry had become a lesser genre, in terms of prestige and market, compared to the novel.<sup>201</sup> Rougemont turned to prose when he was not yet eighteen. Writing journal articles and essays suited him more than poetry; and it also suited the market better.<sup>202</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, Rougemont came to specialise in literary reviews, articles and essays.<sup>203</sup> These genres traditionally served as a refuge for *écrivains ratés*, or for writers who did not publish enough to earn a living.<sup>204</sup> However, the young Rougemont was able to use them to his advantage, as it soon became clear.

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, esp. 328-31; Christophe Charle, *Naissance des "Intellectuels", 1880-1900* (Paris, 1990); Christophe Charle, 'Situation du champ littéraire', *Littératures, L'institution littéraire II* (Dec. 1981). With regard to Switzerland, Daniel Maggetti, *L'Invention de la littérature romande: 1830-1900* (Lausanne, 1995). And more recently Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*; Blaise Wilfert, 'Paris, la France et le reste. Importations littéraires et nationalisme culturel en France, 1885-1930' (Doctorat, Paris I, 2003). For a worldwide analysis, from Madagascar to Croatia, and from Brazil to Switzerland, see the impressive book by Pascale Casanova, recently translated into English: Casanova, *The world republic of Letters*.

<sup>200</sup> Rougemont believed that 'il ne fallait publier que de la poésie', see the interview of Denis de Rougemont, 14 Jan. 1978, pages 29, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 131. On the struggle for aesthetic rules independent from political stakes (art for art's sake) in France, see Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, esp. 178-191, 193-210, 465-509.

<sup>201</sup> On the emergence of the novel as the dominant genre, see Rémy Ponton, 'Naissance du roman psychologique. Capital culturel, capital social et stratégie littéraire à la fin du XIXe siècle', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 4 (1975).

<sup>202</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, the market for poetry (albeit prestigious) has been virtually limited to writers, i.e. to the producers themselves. In the literary field, the economic benefits of a genre tend to decrease as the prestige augments (thus journalism is the opposite of poetry: it reaches a wide market, but 'creative' writers usually despise it). See Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, 193, 199.

<sup>203</sup> See analysis below and the detailed bibliography established by Bruno Ackermann, in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 2, 1158-1211.

<sup>204</sup> Christophe Charle, *Paris fin de siècle* (Paris, 1999), 158.

From very early on, Rougemont proved aware of both the economic constraints of the literary field and the rules of literary creativity. This awareness explains his rapid integration in the literary field. When he was nineteen, he refused to publish an essay (*Philéas*) for fear that it might give the clue to the works he planned to write later.<sup>205</sup> In 1927, he accepted, albeit reluctantly, the idea of making a living out of literature: ‘On m’affirme que je n’y échapperai pas plus qu’un autre : et qu’un beau soir il faille écrire pour vivre, possible; mais, pour sûr, jamais vivre pour écrire.’<sup>206</sup> Literature was to be a quest beyond writing; Rougemont, aged twenty, had renounced pure aestheticism definitely. It was clear from his article ‘Adieu beau désordre’.<sup>207</sup> This has been analysed by his biographers.<sup>208</sup> ‘Adieu beau désordre...’ brought him praises of Robert de Traz (editor of the *Revue de Genève*) and of Jean Paulhan (editor of the *NRF*).<sup>209</sup> Rougemont followed a line of argument similar to that of the young literary critique Marcel Arland, who, in the *NRF*, emphasised the importance of both literary quality and moral integrity.<sup>210</sup>

Rougemont’s awareness of the rules of literary creativity, evident from his articles and book reviews in the 1920s, is significant because Rougemont would never abandon his

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<sup>205</sup> He wrote: ‘Je crois aussi que je ferais mieux de ne pas publier *Philéas*, avant d’avoir fait autre chose du moins. Et d’abord pour une raison littéraire: se livrer ainsi au public, c’est lui donner trop beau jeu pour pénétrer les œuvres qui suivront. [...] il me semble qu’il est bon de maintenir certaine distance entre auteur et public ; et *Philéas* la détruit.’ Rougemont to Traz, Areuse, 7 octobre 1925, Geneva, BPU, Robert de Traz Papers, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 127-8. See manuscript of *Philéas* in Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers.

<sup>206</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘La Part du feu. Lettres sur le mépris de la littérature’, *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)*, 8 (July 1927), 237.

<sup>207</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Adieu beau désordre...’ *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (March 1926), 311-19.

<sup>208</sup> See Ackermann and Deering for a summary of this article, with the reservation that it is an anachronism to state, with Deering, that in this article ‘Rougemont *anticipe* le débat qui va s’engager après la publication en 1927 de l’essai de Julien Benda, *La Trahison des clercs*’, in Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l’unité européenne*, 133 n.1. Rougemont followed the ongoing debate in the French literary field, and not the other way round. In 1929, Rougemont acknowledged his position as a novice (about the debate on *La Trahison des clercs*): ‘Ce n’est plus l’heure de venir prendre position dans un débat où les voix les mieux écoutées ont dit ce qu’elles avaient à dire’, in Denis de Rougemont, ‘Julien Benda: *La Fin de l’Eternel*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Nov. 1929), 638-9.

<sup>209</sup> Rougemont, ‘Adieu beau désordre...’ Traz wrote: ‘Je trouve un manuscrit de vous – excellent – et je l’envoie dare dare à l’imprimerie’ (Traz to Rougemont, 17 Feb. 1926, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers); Paulhan wrote: ‘J’ai lu avec un très vif plaisir votre étude « Adieu, beau désordre » qu’a publiée la *Revue de Genève*. Et s’il vous intéressait quelque jour de collaborer à la *Nouvelle Revue Française*, c’est avec un très grand intérêt que je lirais les notes ou les articles que vous voudriez bien nous soumettre.’ Jean Paulhan to Rougemont, Paris, 3 May 1926, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers.

<sup>210</sup> Whilst rejecting dogmatism, Arland (1899-1986) – who had undergone a deep religious experience a few years earlier – maintained the vital role of religion. See Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 136-8.

concern with style. In 1958, in an unpublished note untitled 'Faire le point', he would confess: 'Ce qui me ferait le plus plaisir serait d'avoir une grande influence en tant qu'écrivain. Ma vanité majeure est là. Preuve : je suis capable de gauchir légèrement une thèse à cause du nombre de syllabes dans un mot de telle phrase.'<sup>211</sup> Thus, Rougemont never abandoned his ambition to be a writer. As a Swiss writing in French, Rougemont faced the question of how (if at all) French Swiss literature differs from French literature.

## **Littérature romande**

The problem of a distinctive French Swiss literature ('littérature romande') appeared in the nineteenth century, with the idea that the French Swiss Cantons form a single entity: 'la Suisse romande'.<sup>212</sup> Daniel Maggetti has argued that French Swiss literature was invented between 1830 and 1900, as the 'canons' of Swiss literature gradually achieved independence from Parisian literary rules.<sup>213</sup> Yet the question of an autonomous Swiss culture was still conflict-ridden in the twentieth century. For example, *La Voile latine* – a journal with the program subtitle '*Culture suisse*' – created in 1904, was interrupted in 1910 because of dissenting interpretations of Swiss cultural identity.<sup>214</sup> More precisely, the shipwreck of *La Voile latine* was caused by a conflict over the Protestant influence on French Swiss cultural identity.<sup>215</sup> This would prove an enduring issue in the twentieth century; and given Rougemont's Swiss and Protestant education, it was doubly important to him.

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<sup>211</sup> Unpublished ms. 'Faire le point, 10.04.58 à Opio. Sur D Rgt.', in Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, File: 'Inédits: Autobiographie'.

<sup>212</sup> The editor of a three-volume *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande*, Roger Francillon, continues to wonder at the status of the French Swiss writer: 'Est-il un écrivain français que le hasard de la génétique a fait naître en Suisse romande? Est-ce un écrivain Suisse qui écrit en français?' Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, I. Du Moyen Age à 1815* (3 vols. vol. 1. Lausanne, 1996), 7.

<sup>213</sup> See Daniel Maggetti, 'L'âge d'or de la "littérature nationale"', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, 2. De Töpffer à Ramuz* (Lausanne, 1997); Maggetti, *L'Invention de la littérature romande: 1830-1900*.

<sup>214</sup> See Françoise Fornerod and Roger Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, 2. De Töpffer à Ramuz* (Lausanne, 1997), esp.234; Roger Francillon, 'La guerre des Burgondes et des Helvètes: disputes autour de la *Voile latine* et des *Cahiers vaudois* à propos de l'identité suisse', in Guy Marchal and Aram Mattioli (eds), *Erfundene Schweiz / La Suisse imaginée* (Zürich, 1992), 265-74.

<sup>215</sup> This is one of the most debated themes in Swiss literary history. I follow the thesis of Pierre-Olivier Walzer, *Le Sabordage de "La Voile latine"* (Lausanne, 1993).

In the interwar period, the majority of French Swiss writers continued to turn to France for style, and many supported the view that the French Swiss had to content themselves with borrowing a foreign language with respect, and even, in some cases, a sense of guilt.<sup>216</sup> An avant-garde rebelled against submission to Paris. Charles Ferdinand Ramuz (one of the founders of *La Voile latine*) hoped to shape his style on the very landscape of his Canton (Vaud), whilst being universal in his subject-matters.<sup>217</sup> Ramuz's plea for a French that would not necessarily be 'le français de France' fuelled passionate debates in the 1920s.<sup>218</sup> The stakes were not only aesthetic, but also political. This was the context in which Denis de Rougemont, still at the Gymnase, dedicated himself to poetry.

To date, there has been no serious consideration of Rougemont's position vis-à-vis the debate on the independence of the French Swiss literary field from Paris. It shows a rather conventional Rougemont: whereas the Swiss avant-garde fought for autonomy vis-à-vis Paris, Rougemont was looking towards the French capital for literary approval. Rougemont could have taken part in a French Swiss literature autonomous from Paris. Yet he achieved just the opposite. In what follows, I argue that Rougemont was a gifted and ambitious writer, concerned with Parisian letters more than with Swiss politics.

According to Rougemont's own interpretation, he would have entered the French Swiss literary field in 1924, almost by accident.<sup>219</sup> The occasion was a review article on 'M.

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<sup>216</sup> This was notably the view of Maurice Milloud, see Pierre-André Rieben, 'L'écrivain romand et la langue, C.F. Ramuz et Edmond Gilliard', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, 2. De Töpffer à Ramuz* (Lausanne, 1997), 257-8.

<sup>217</sup> In 1914, Ramuz had published his '*Raison d'être*' in the first issue of the *Cahiers vaudois*: 'Mais qu'il existe, une fois, grâce à nous, un livre, un chapitre, une simple phrase qui n'aient pu être écrits qu'ici, parce que copiés dans leur inflexion sur telle courbe de colline ou scandés dans leur rythme par le retour du lac sur les galets d'un beau rivage, quelque part, si on veut, entre Cully et Saint-Saphorin, – que ce peu de chose voie le jour, et nous serons absous.' C.F. Ramuz, quoted in Fornerod and Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', 239. *Raison d'être* remains the most famous French Swiss literary manifesto up to this day.

<sup>218</sup> See notably *Pour ou contre C.F. Ramuz, Cahiers de la Quinzaine* (Paris, 1926).

<sup>219</sup> See Denis de Rougemont, 'Denis de Rougemont tel qu'en lui-même...' *Cadmos*, 33, Special issue: Denis de Rougemont (Spring 1986), 8-9. An historian influenced by Bourdieu would not fail to notice that what Rougemont gives as coincidences in his interpretation reveal precisely his position as a young French Swiss writer: poetry was the style favoured by younger and marginal writers, and Montherlant, whom he commented on, happened to be a writer acclaimed by French youth.

de Montherlant, le sport et les jésuites', published in *La Semaine littéraire*.<sup>220</sup> The choice of this journal, possibly the most prestigious French Swiss literary publication at the time, leads to question Rougemont's interpretation: his very first publication cannot have been fortuitous. Besides, it epitomizes some enduring features of his literary production. Firstly, Rougemont praised violence and partiality in literature, two elements he cultivated himself, throughout his life. The writer Jean Starobinsky would recall Rougemont's 'bellicose and antagonist style' unto the very last days of his life.<sup>221</sup> Secondly, Rougemont, aged seventeen, did not hesitate to give his view on morals and religion, with a certain boldness on the part of a *Gymnase* student criticizing an established writer in a major literary journal. Thirdly, it may be worth emphasising Rougemont's call for freedom and his anti-catholic pique: 'Il me semble bien paradoxal de vouloir unir dans une même philosophie la morale jésuite, faite de règles et de contraintes imposées dans le but de restreindre la liberté et l'initiative individuelles, et la morale des sports anglais, morale qui veut former des hommes maîtres d'eux-mêmes, c'est à dire libres.'<sup>222</sup> An 'éthique du sport', conferring virtue, 'sert mieux la démocratie que l'Eglise romaine'.<sup>223</sup> The three aspects touched upon in Rougemont's first article correspond to his lifelong areas of interest: literature, politics and religion. Having said that, in the 1920s, he focused on literature, and gave little time to politics and religion.

At the time when he published his first article, Rougemont was called 'Chauvin, grand critique littéraire devant l'Eternel, Chauvin à l'âme multiple et diverse comme l'immoralité morale d'André Gide notre Maître'.<sup>224</sup> Rougemont's nickname 'Chauvin' could be interpreted as a sign of his obsession with Paris, and its literary star André Gide.<sup>225</sup> Rougemont started his literary career as a student in Neuchâtel, but from the start he kept an eye on Paris. Looking

<sup>220</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites', *La semaine littéraire*, 1571, (9 Feb. 1924), 63-5.

<sup>221</sup> Quoted by Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 20.

<sup>222</sup> Rougemont, 'M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites', 64.

<sup>223</sup> Rougemont, 'M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites', 64.

<sup>224</sup> Alfred Rosset, 3 Dec. 1924, in G. Attinger and E. Berthoud (eds), *Centenaire de la Société d'Etude* (Neuchâtel, 1977), 277, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 80-1.

<sup>225</sup> In 1969, Rougemont recalled: 'La lecture des *Nourritures terrestres* à seize ans m'a fait jouer du violon comme jamais, mais ce n'était pas assez, je suis sorti, sur mon vélo j'ai foncé vers le lac. 'Partir !' et toute la vie qui change, tout était libre devant moi ! J'ai erré jusqu'au soir dans l'euphorie [...]'. Answer to a questionnaire by Frédéric Eigeldinger and Roland Kaer, in *Revue neuchâteloise* (Spring 1969), 9, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 102 n.57.



towards France, whilst striving to assert its own style, was the dilemma of French Swiss literature at least until the 1960s.<sup>226</sup>

Rougemont was well integrated in the French Swiss literary field in the late 1920s, both socially and in terms of his publications. He belonged to clubs, the *Société de Belles-Lettres* (from the beginning of University in Neuchâtel) and the *Brambilla-Club* (from the time of his student years in Geneva).<sup>227</sup> These two literary societies, although Swiss-based, were open to European letters. Describing *Belles-Lettres* as 'l'esprit romand', as Henri de Ziegler did, should not imply a militant French Swiss identity.<sup>228</sup> Most *Bellelettriers* – Rougemont perhaps more than others – displayed 'les enthousiasmes naïfs pour les formes les plus avancées des lettres parisiennes'.<sup>229</sup>

The journals in which Rougemont published in his student years show the development of a promising literary career. Rougemont published fifty book reviews between 1925 and 1928, and a dozen in 1929-30, all of them in French Swiss journals.<sup>230</sup> He sent his reviews to Robert de Traz's *Revue de Genève* predominantly, which was to incarnate 'l'esprit de Genève', cosmopolitan and European.<sup>231</sup> From 1930 onwards, when Traz put a stop to the *Revue de Genève*, Rougemont started publishing in *La Nouvelle Revue française*. To publish book reviews in the *Revue de Genève* and the *NRF* was a significant achievement for the young Rougemont: reviewing in these journals tended to remain the privilege of established writers and academics.<sup>232</sup> Reviewing allowed Rougemont to show his critical talents. At the same time, he tried more 'creative' genres. In 1926, as he turned twenty, Rougemont was able

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<sup>226</sup> See Anne-Lise Delacrétaz, Françoise Fornerod, and Roger Francillon, 'Quelques aspects de la vie littéraire', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, III*. (Lausanne, 1998), 56.

<sup>227</sup> See Denis de Rougemont, 'Les soirées du Brambilla-Club', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Genève)*, 5 (May 1930), republished in Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube*, 195-201. The Brambilla-Club (from E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Princess Brambilla*) had been founded in 1925 by Jean Cassou and Edmond Jaloux (the editors of the Geneva's *Revue européenne*) to diffuse German literature in Francophone circles.

<sup>228</sup> In Henri de Ziegler, 'L'essence de Belles-Lettres', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Lausanne)*, 3 (Jan. 1929), 86, 88.

<sup>229</sup> See *Souvenirs du Centenaire de Belles-Lettres 1832-1932* (Neuchâtel, 1932), 4.

<sup>230</sup> I refer to the very helpful bibliography in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 2, 1160-5.

<sup>231</sup> On the creation of the *Revue de Genève* and the cultural life it reflected, see esp. Fornerod and Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', 233-44.

<sup>232</sup> Charle, *Paris fin de siècle*, 158.

to publish articles in *La Semaine littéraire* and in *La Revue de Genève*, as well as in the Parisian *Cahiers du mois*.<sup>233</sup> Thus, before 1930, Rougemont was already well-situated in the literary field, in particular in French Switzerland but also already internationally (the *Revue de Genève* was determinedly European).

Rougemont entrusted his first two books to French Swiss publishers, thereby confirming his integration in the French Swiss literary field. *Les Méfaits de l'instruction publique* (1929) was the first publication of *Les Petites Lettres de Lausanne*, which was aimed at young French Swiss writers like him.<sup>234</sup> His second book *Le Paysan du Danube* (1932) came out in Payot's new collection *Les Cahiers romands*.<sup>235</sup> Both books were printed around five hundred copies, which recalls a famous editorial in *Aujourd'hui* by Ramuz: 'Avis aux cinq cent lecteurs'.<sup>236</sup> The French Swiss public was small: it was that of an avant-garde. Hence the attraction of Paris.

At the end of his life, Rougemont stated that in the 1920s his articles 'étaient tous à la gloire des surréalistes et, en général, de la plus extrême avant-garde littéraire et anarchisante française'.<sup>237</sup> This account has been repeated since; it fits in with the image of Rougemont as a *révolté* and a *non-conformiste*. However, Rougemont was a more conventional youth than has been said so far. Rougemont's early writings evince a contradiction between the style he admired and the morals he kept. He admired the style of the surrealists, but constantly denounced their lack of morals. He faced a conflict between aesthetics and ethics.

## Aesthetics and ethics

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<sup>233</sup> Rougemont, 'Adieu beau désordre...'; Denis de Rougemont, 'Confession tendancieuse', *Les Cahiers du mois*, 21-22, III-IV (June 1926); Denis de Rougemont, 'Soir de Florence', *La Semaine littéraire*, 1715, (18 Nov. 1926).

<sup>234</sup> Rougemont, *Les Méfaits de l'instruction publique*. On *Les Petites Lettres de Lausanne*, see Simon Roth and François Vallotton, 'L'édition en Suisse romande de 1920 à 1970', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande*, III. *De la seconde guerre aux années 1970* (Lausanne, 1998), 26-7.

<sup>235</sup> Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube*.

<sup>236</sup> *Aujourd'hui* was a French Swiss journal, see below for further analysis.

<sup>237</sup> Interview of Denis de Rougemont by Mary-Jo Deering, 27 Feb. 1978, page 3, quoted by Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*, 132.

To illustrate Rougemont's moral concern, one may look at his call upon the literary critic and theologian of Swiss birth Alexandre Vinet (1797-1847). The subject is most interesting because it could easily have led to a political plea for an autonomous French Swiss literature. Instead, Rougemont chose to defend a conventional Protestantism. Thus, when reviewing a French book on Vinet (*La Revue de Genève*, 1925) Rougemont criticized the French author for failing to see the theological importance of Vinet.<sup>238</sup>

It is noteworthy that Rougemont did not pick up on Vinet's support of French cultural centralism (Vinet is notorious for claiming that the French Swiss were 'éloignés des lieux où cette langue est intimement sentie et parlée dans toute sa pureté', to the extent that 'le français est pour nous, jusqu'à un certain point, une langue étrangère').<sup>239</sup> Instead, Rougemont developed Vinet's conventional image as a father of modern Protestantism (Vinet contributed to found 'l'Eglise libre' in the Canton of Vaud, in 1847).<sup>240</sup> This image had been challenged by a literary avant-garde since the early twentieth century, when Protestantism (and Vinet in particular) had been made responsible for the alleged Swiss mediocrity.<sup>241</sup> Although Rougemont may not have been aware of this debate (taking place around 1910), he sought to defend, with his editor Robert de Traz, the cultural and political fertility of Protestantism.<sup>242</sup>

Rougemont's book review on Vinet came out in the context of a series of the conversions to Catholicism of a number of intellectuals starting in the late nineteenth

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<sup>238</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Ernest Seillière: *Alexandre Vinet, historien de la pensée française*', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Oct. 1925).

<sup>239</sup> Alexandre Vinet, *Chrestomathie française* (vol.1, 11<sup>th</sup> edn. Neuchâtel/Bruxelles, 1859), 5, quoted by Jean-Marie Roulin, 'Alexandre Vinet', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande*, 2. *De Töpffer à Ramuz* (Lausanne, 1997), 90.

<sup>240</sup> Roulin, 'Alexandre Vinet', 79.

<sup>241</sup> The two contradictory images of Vinet – the supporter of 'le français de France' and the militant of Protestant independence – made him a controversial figure in Switzerland. In the years 1908-10, Vinet and Protestant 'culture' were the subject of the debate on and alleged Swiss mediocrity in *La Voile latine*, which eventually brought the end of this journal, as mentioned above. See Paul Seippel, 'Le silence de Vinet', *La Semaine littéraire* (14 Nov. 1908), 542; Adrien Bovy, *La Voile latine*, 5 (March-April 1909), 59; in Fornerod and Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', esp.236.

<sup>242</sup> Robert de Traz, 'Notre tradition protestante', *La Voile latine*, 6 (1910).

century.<sup>243</sup> Rougemont attacked the two most influential Catholic intellectuals in the 1920s, perhaps in response to Maritain's condemnation of Protestantism in his book *Trois réformateurs* (June 1925).<sup>244</sup> Rougemont claimed that 'la position purement chrétienne' of Vinet is 'infiniment plus forte que celle d'un Maurras ou que celle d'un Maritain'.<sup>245</sup> In October 1925, when Rougemont wrote his review, the Action Française seemed to have managed a skilful combination between tradition (Catholicism and Neo-Classicism) and modern science (which claimed to have the monopoly of truth).<sup>246</sup> Rougemont was aware that those who opposed the Action Française risked being left with the negation of religion or truth. He defined his times as an 'époque déchirée entre un thomisme et un nihilisme exaspérés'.<sup>247</sup> The solution – naively put – was a 'Pascal Protestant': Alexandre Vinet.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for Rougemont, the religious issue overshadowed the question of an independent French Swiss literature.

In 1927, Rougemont also called on Vinet as an antidote to surrealism. Rougemont responded to Aragon's negation of salvation quoting Vinet: 'le plus irrévocable désespoir n'est encore qu'un appel à la foi la plus haute'.<sup>249</sup> This may have been a weighty critique of

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<sup>243</sup> Gugelot, *La conversion des intellectuels au catholicisme en France (1885-1935)*. Some of the conversions were fostered by Maritain, and some proved fleeting (i.e. Maurice Sachs, the friend of Jean Cocteau, who converted in 1925 and was at the centre of public scandals in 1926, after a brief attempt to follow the seminary). For French Switzerland, see Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 107-32. The conversions to Catholicism occurred mostly in the *Belles-Lettres* society of Lausanne in the 1920s, and the graduate community of Geneva. For English and American intellectuals, see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic converts: British and American intellectuals turn to Rome* (London, 1997).

<sup>244</sup> Maurras and Maritain shaped a 'golden age' of Catholic thought, which marked a whole 'intellectual generation' across Europe, and especially in France, Belgium and French Switzerland. Charles Maurras, the leader of Action Française, defended 'integral nationalism' and theorised a plot against France, triggered by the 'four confederated states' (Jews, Protestants, free-masons, and foreigners (*métèques*)). Until the papal condemnation of 'integral nationalism' in December 1926, he was supported by Jacques Maritain, a neo-Thomist philosopher converted to Catholicism in 1906. Maritain, followed by most French Catholic intellectuals, developed a neo-Thomist doctrine, which was at once political, social and aesthetic. This was encouraged by the papacy at least until 1926. See esp. Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, 9-13.

<sup>245</sup> Rougemont underlined Vinet's 'mysticisme protestant', insisting that 'rien n'est plus protestant' than Vinet's claim to be 'un chrétien sans épithète', in Rougemont, 'Ernest Seillière: *Alexandre Vinet, historien de la pensée française*', 1797-8.

<sup>246</sup> Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 120.

<sup>247</sup> Rougemont, 'Ernest Seillière: *Alexandre Vinet, historien de la pensée française*', 1798.

<sup>248</sup> Rougemont, 'Ernest Seillière: *Alexandre Vinet, historien de la pensée française*', 1798.

<sup>249</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Louis Aragon, le beau prétexte', *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)*, 5 (April 1927), 136.

surrealism; yet it was also conventional in Switzerland. Rougemont's appreciation of the surrealist avant-garde remained ambivalent at least until 1930. On the one hand, he admired the subversive strategy of the French avant-garde, and particularly praised the styles of Aragon and Breton.<sup>250</sup> On the other hand, he took on board conventional objections against surrealism: 'Les témoignages ne manquent pas sur la détresse morale de la génération surréaliste.'<sup>251</sup>

The question of morals in literature, which was much debated in Paris at the time, provided Rougemont with his first opportunity to publish in Paris. In 1926, *Les Cahiers du mois* launched a survey (following Marcel Arland's initiative), asking young writers to make literary confessions ('*Examens de conscience*').<sup>252</sup> The survey was supposed to prove the moral concerns of young writers, and their departure from pure aestheticism. And Rougemont did so.<sup>253</sup> He proved disarmingly honest in explaining how he sought to find his vocation as a writer. He stated his aversion for politics explicitly: political ideologies appeared to be 'une dérision complète. Je m'étonne qu'après tant d'expériences ratées on puisse encore se persuader de la vérité d'un système, hors la religion.'<sup>254</sup> Again, there was nothing revolutionary, nothing rebellious in this.

Later, the survey of *Les Cahiers du mois* came to be regarded as a landmark for 'la génération de l'inquiétude', characterised by spiritual concerns (as opposed to materialist preoccupations).<sup>255</sup> The spiritual concerns that would characterize personalist writers in the

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<sup>250</sup> See Rougemont, 'Adieu beau désordre...' 315; Denis de Rougemont, 'André Breton: *Manifeste du Surréalisme*', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (June 1925), 776. And Rougemont's praise of Aragon's *Traité du style*, Denis de Rougemont, 'Aragon: *Traité du Style*', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Aug. 1928).

<sup>251</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'René Crevel : *Mon corps et moi*', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (May 1926), 662.

<sup>252</sup> *Les Cahiers du mois*, edited by François and André Berge, and Maurice Betz, published young writers and surveys on contemporary issues. On the special issue *Examens de conscience*, see Daniel-Rops, *Les Années tournantes*, 55.

<sup>253</sup> See extended analysis of his response in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 96-105; Jean Starobinski, 'Ecrire n'est pas un art d'agrément', *Cadmos*, 33, Special Issue Denis de Rougemont (Spring 1986).

<sup>254</sup> Rougemont, 'Confession tendancieuse', 147 n.2. Explicit statements of Rougemont's aversion for politics remain rare in the 1920s. See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 100 n.49.

<sup>255</sup> See the testimony of Daniel-Rops on the 1920s, in Daniel-Rops, *Les Années tournantes*, 55.

1930s were already present in the mid-1920s. However, personalism, as a political cause, remained absent until 1930-1. Rougemont, in particular, criticised the encroachment of politics on literature in France.

Rougemont identified with the avant-garde, and yet wanted to dissociate the literary avant-garde from politics. Although he supported Aragon when he cried ‘A bas le clair génie français!’,<sup>256</sup> he condemned the surrealists’ move towards communism (initiated in 1925):<sup>257</sup>

Aragon, pourquoi se faire le marchand des oeuvres complètes de Karl Marx? Si vous ne dites pas aussi merde pour Marx ou Lénine, je le dirai pour vous. [...] Est-ce que vraiment vous ne pouvez vous libérer de cette manie française, la politique [...] ? [...] Cette réaction même est ce qu’il y a de plus français; [elle] donne au surréalisme ce petit côté jacobin si authentiquement, si déplorablement français.<sup>258</sup>

Rougemont derided the French surrealists, who, seeking a public role, ‘se tournent naturellement vers l’action, c’est-à-dire, – nous sommes en France – vers la politique.’<sup>2</sup> Rougemont was marking his difference as a Swiss when he thus mocked French surrealists for only being able to envisage action in political terms.

### ***Les Méfaits de l’instruction publique***

In 1929, Rougemont published his first essay, *Les Méfaits de l’instruction publique* (abbreviated as *Les Méfaits*), which marked the apparition of political questions. How did politics, which he hitherto despised, enter Rougemont’s preoccupations? Patrick Leuzinger, the author of a thesis on Rougemont’s 1930s ‘engagement antilibéral’, has made *Les Méfaits* a

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in Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, esp. 7-12, 145-9.

<sup>256</sup> Rougemont, ‘Louis Aragon, le beau prétexte’, 139. On the ‘génie français’ as the category of established writers, see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 106-60.

<sup>257</sup> The manifesto ‘Aux travailleurs intellectuels. Oui ou non condamnez-vous la guerre?’ [about the Rif war], in *L’Humanité* (2 Jul. 1925) marks the beginning of the anti-colonialist and anti-communist commitment of the surrealists, see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 148; Jean-François Sirinelli, *Intellectuels et passions françaises. Manifestes et pétitions au XXe siècle* (Paris, 1990), 62-4.

<sup>258</sup> Rougemont, ‘Louis Aragon, le beau prétexte’, 140-1.

<sup>259</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Pierre Naville: *La révolution et les intellectuels*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Nov. 1928).

précis of Rougemont's pre-war political thought.<sup>260</sup> Leuzinger's distortions force me to give more consideration to *Les Méfaits* than I would otherwise have done (there is no trace of personalism in *Les Méfaits*). Here, I argue that although this polemical essay marks the beginning of Rougemont's concern for politics, Rougemont had little political project other than to criticize.

In the Swiss tradition of pedagogical essays, which started with Rousseau's *Emile* (1762), *Les Méfaits* has the particularity of combining pedagogy with a rejection of democracy.<sup>261</sup> For Rougemont, education and politics were inseparable: 'L'instruction publique et la démocratie sont sœurs siamoises'.<sup>262</sup> *Les Méfaits* has been misunderstood when authors have focused either on politics or on pedagogy (usually on pedagogy), without considering the interrelatedness of Rougemont's criticism of the state and school. Leuzinger focused on the political dimension of *Les Méfaits*, to counter Ackermann's quasi-exclusive focus on the pedagogical question. Both interpretations have a point, but also a limit: Ackermann dismissed the anti-democratic contents of *Les Méfaits* too quickly; and Leuzinger failed to understand the insertion of *Les Méfaits* in the Swiss education debate of the late 1920s.

Ackermann has analysed *Les Méfaits* with respect to the education debate in Neuchâtel.<sup>263</sup> I would enlarge his analysis by pointing out that *Les Méfaits* also fits into the attack on academia and intellectualism, launched by various writers at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>264</sup> It is notorious that, in the Action Française (AF), anti-academism was associated with an anti-democratic stance. The influence of the AF and Charles Maurras,

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<sup>260</sup> Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral', 24-45.

<sup>261</sup> Pierre-André Rieben, 'L'écrivain et l'école', in Roger Francillon (ed.) *Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande, 2. De Töpffer à Ramuz* (Lausanne, 1997), 275.

<sup>262</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', in Pierre-Olivier Walzer (ed.) *Trois pamphlets pédagogiques* (Lausanne, 1984), 142.

<sup>263</sup> See esp. Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 116-22.

<sup>264</sup> See 'Le savant et le littéraire', in Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 108-20.

across Europe cannot be overemphasised (at least until the Papal condemnation of 1926).<sup>2</sup> With an opposite political agenda, C.F. Ramuz also defined French Swiss literature as anti-academic: ‘Il faut que ce soit contre-universitaire, contre-intellectuel, c’est à dire *vivant*.’<sup>2</sup> The anti-academic row was neither restricted to a particular political tendency, nor to a particular country.<sup>267</sup>

Thus, writers of different political tendencies attacked the sclerosis of the education system, across Europe. Ironically, they condemned the institutions (schools, universities, books and journals) to which they owed much of their training – if not living. In criticising the school, they did not depart significantly from the views of educated people at the time: it was conventional to contrast the positivist belief in objectivity (which conditioned much of school teaching), with the children’s need for creativity and imagination.<sup>268</sup> Since Rousseau, it has been a cliché to oppose children’s natural independence and spontaneity to the rigid and authoritarian social structures into which they are forced. Following the Rousseauian idea that education ought to be pursued out of natural curiosity, *Les Méfaits* criticised primary school as a rigid institution and rejected bookish knowledge.<sup>269</sup> Rougemont contrasted a Rousseauian (or Romantic) conception of nature with the ugliness of primary schools.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> For a recent reassessment of Maurras as a writer, see Bruno Goyet, *Charles Maurras* (Paris, 2000).; on the influence of Action Française, see esp. Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain, une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*. See for example in Portugal, the influence of Charles Maurras on *Integralismo Lusitano*, Antonio Costa Pinto, *The Blue Shirts, Portugal fascists and the New State* (Social Science monographs. Columbia, 2000). Another example of the intellectual prestige of Action Française is the subscription of Walter Benjamin – *a priori* so foreign to Maurras – to the AF journal in 1924, which he found well written and full of insight on German politics, see letter from Walter Benjamin to Gerhard Scholem, 13 June 1924, in Walter Benjamin, *Correspondance I: 1910-1928* (transl. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, Paris, 1979), 320, quoted by Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 98.

<sup>266</sup> C.F. Ramuz, *Lettres 1900-1918*, 290 (defining the style of *Cahiers vaudois*), quoted by Fornerod and Francillon, ‘La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939’, 238.

<sup>267</sup> Christophe Charle has argued that it was stronger in France, where the combination of socio-cultural factors and the general view of the scientist as an ‘intellectuel’ increased the writers’ insecurity. The profession of writer and journalist was put under pressure by the emergence of the scientist as a model of the intellectual, on the one hand, and the boom of the intellectual class – in the broadest sense: non-manual workers – on the other hand. See Charle, *Naissance des “Intellectuels”, 1880-1900*, 35, 38 sq.

<sup>268</sup> Rieben, ‘L’écrivain et l’école’, 269. See also the works of Henri Roorda (1870-1925), a mathematics teacher at the Gymnase in Lausanne: *Le Pédagogue n’aime pas les enfants*, first published in *Les Cahiers vaudois* (1917), reprint in *Trois pamphlets pédagogiques* (Lausanne, 1984).

<sup>269</sup> Rougemont, *Les Méfaits de l’instruction publique*.

<sup>270</sup> ‘Dans ce décor s’écoulaient huit années de votre vie, citoyens! Et vous pensez que c’est un grand progrès sur la Nature’, in Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 129.



Thus, Rougemont's call for creative freedom in schools was far from exceptional, in a country of pedagogues.<sup>271</sup> What was more unusual was his attack on Swiss democracy. Even so, Rougemont did not seek to be original: 'Bien entendu, tout cela a été dit. (Un peu autrement, j'en conviens).'<sup>272</sup> Nor did he seek to be fair: 'Ce que je vais dire est sans doute injuste et faux dans un très grand nombre de cas'; and he repeated: 'Je ne cherche point l'équité'.<sup>273</sup> He claimed: 'Je demande le droit de démolir. Et me l'accorde aussitôt. *Sans conditions*. Mon rôle n'est pas de proposer une nouvelle forme politique.'<sup>274</sup> This suggests that the politics of *Les Méfaits* should not be taken too seriously.

Subversive claims inevitably entailed exaggerations. However, Rougemont maintained that 'ces exagérations ne sont pas bien graves, parce qu'elles sont comiques précisément'.<sup>275</sup> Do comic or stylistic effects excuse exaggerations? Not always, and Rougemont proves particularly off-putting when he insults or threatens rhetorical interlocutors.<sup>276</sup> Rougemont also made a deplorable comment in calling the principles of public instruction 'UNE MÉTHODE D'ABÂTARDISSEMENT DE LA RACE' (Rougemont had read Barrès and Maurras).<sup>277</sup> However, despite this comment, Rougemont was not anti-semitic, and Leuzinger has drawn abusive conclusions on anti-semitism, without evidence.<sup>278</sup> It was not unusual for descriptions of Swiss communities to be tainted by organicist vocabulary, without being anti-semitic.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Rieben, 'L'écrivain et l'école', 269, 275-7.

<sup>272</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 139.

<sup>273</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 127, 130.

<sup>274</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 120.

<sup>275</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 140.

<sup>276</sup> E.g. 'Vous n'aimez pas le risque, vous préférez le surplace'; 'Vous ne tarderez pas à périr [sous votre scepticisme d'un ridicule écrasant]'; or 'votre mine stupidement rassurée', Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 149, 153, 155.

<sup>277</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 138. Rougemont capitalized. On his reading Barrès and Maurras, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 90, 98-9.

<sup>278</sup> Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral', 55.

<sup>279</sup> For an analysis of organic notions of community in Switzerland in the 1930s, see Olivier Zimmer, 'A unique fusion of the natural and the man-made': the trajectory of Swiss Nationalism, 1933-39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39, 1 (2004), 14-15.

*Les Méfaits* was not democratic: Rougemont opposed *en bloc* academism, rationalism, positivism, and ‘les dogmes démocratiques, qui sont une généralisation de la règle de trois’.<sup>280</sup> Rougemont deplored that Swiss primary schools seemed to favour the mediocre.<sup>281</sup> The main purpose of primary schools, according to Rougemont, was ‘la fabrication en série de petits démocrates conscients et organisés’.<sup>282</sup> He regretted: ‘On forme nos gosses à ne point se poser de questions dont ils n’aient pas appris par cœur la réponse.’<sup>283</sup> He criticised the way in which subjects were imposed onto children, hour after hour, in a school day, without time for initiative. School discipline had a political aim: ‘La discipline forme des gobeurs et des inertes, fournit des moutons aux partis et prédispose les citoyens suisses à prendre au sérieux les innombrables *défense de*, petites crottes noires et blanches qui marquent un peu partout le passage de l’Etat...’<sup>284</sup> It is clear from *Les Méfaits* that Rougemont loathed both ‘socialisme ou morgue bourgeoise, esprit de parti, arrivisme et parlementarisme’.<sup>285</sup> This repugnance for parliamentary politics would not change in the 1930s.

Nevertheless, Leuzinger was wrong to read *Les Méfaits* as a systematic antiliberal pamphlet.<sup>286</sup> *Les Méfaits* proves self-contradictory politically and socially. The political argumentation is inconsistent, and suggests literary posturing, rather than serious consideration. Rougemont drew from Julien Benda to oppose partisan passion.<sup>287</sup> His chief political claim was that ‘l’école s’est vendue à des intérêts politiques’.<sup>288</sup> At the same time, he repeated arguments of the French right: from the diatribe against rationalism – ‘L’instruction publique est la forme la plus commune de la peste rationaliste qui sévit dans le monde depuis

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<sup>280</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 126.

<sup>281</sup> See esp. Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 133, 137.

<sup>282</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 141-2.

<sup>283</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 149.

<sup>284</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 135.

<sup>285</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’).

<sup>286</sup> As he repeatedly suggests. E.g. Leuzinger, ‘Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l’engagement antilibéral’, 27, 105.

<sup>287</sup> Rougemont’s heading ‘La trahison de l’instruction publique’ was borrowed from Julien Benda’s *La Trahison des clercs* (1927), which famously opposed ‘Justice’ and ‘Vérité’ to partisan passions.

<sup>288</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 146.

le XVIIIe (depuis les dernières pestes noires)';<sup>289</sup> to the opposition to positivism, which made primary school 'la plus grande force anti-religieuse de ce temps'.<sup>290</sup> After this diatribe, emulating the French extreme-right, Rougemont urged anarchists and utopians to manifest themselves in the political sphere.<sup>291</sup> Anarchy and utopia were defined apolitically as 'un degré d'intensité dans la vie, non pas un parti'; so that the anarchist was 'un homme libre qui a une foi (ou un amour) et qui s'y consacre'; and 'l'utopiste, c'est l'inventeur', challenging the boundaries of reality and knowledge.<sup>292</sup>

The conclusion to *Les Méfaits* called for an awkward combination of Yoga (this oriental 'culture des facultés physiques et mystiques') and 'la discipline jésuite et le drill militaire' (which was supposed to be the western equivalent).<sup>293</sup> Military and Jesuit discipline was in staunch contradiction with his call for maximum individual freedom and for an education as diverse as possible.<sup>294</sup> Rougemont especially drew on the French rightwing writer Montherlant (a reference for him since 1924) for praises of Jesuit and military conduct.<sup>295</sup> Rougemont was aware of the awkwardness of his reference to the military: 'il n'y a pas là de quoi se tordre'.<sup>296</sup> Across Europe, the 'generation of 1914' ranked elitism, sacrifice and fraternity, as the highest possible values and the solution to the famous crisis of Western civilisation.<sup>297</sup> Rougemont was too young to have fought in the war and in any case came from a neutral state. Even so, he elaborated on his experience of the military service, completed a few months before writing *Les Méfaits*.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 151.

<sup>290</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 148. It is interesting that, in the 1930s, Rougemont would use similar medical metaphors (plague, virus) to condemn nazism and communism as attempts to create surrogate religions. See Chapter 6 and 7.

<sup>291</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 155.

<sup>292</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 155.

<sup>293</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 156-7.

<sup>294</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 158-9.

<sup>295</sup> Rougemont, 'M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites'.

<sup>296</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 158.

<sup>297</sup> Wohl, *The generation of 1914*, 215, 231.

<sup>298</sup> Rougemont, 'Les méfaits de l'instruction publique', 158.

In short, all that seemed to matter in *Les Méfaits* was subversion. A polemical style and subversive tone are characteristic of writers in a ‘dominated position’, impatient to earn a reputation in the literary field.<sup>299</sup> It is helpful to recall that the two authors whom Rougemont most admired, for their style, were Montherlant (right-wing) and Aragon (extreme-left).<sup>3</sup> They had in common to be fashionable among French youth. Rougemont ended his pamphlet on a romantic note:<sup>301</sup> he dreamt of ‘le temps des mages’ – a mythical anti-rationalist and anti-positivist age to come.<sup>302</sup> A comment that Rougemont once made about Louis Aragon applies to himself: ‘devant cette ostentation de révolte’, he features ‘une folie de la persécution, qui se cherche partout des prétextes, et une passion farouche pour la liberté qui font de cet ombrageux personnage une manière de Rousseau surréaliste’.<sup>303</sup> In *Les Méfaits*, Rougemont was a cross between Rousseau and the surrealists.

The reception of *Les Méfaits* by the Swiss public was positive, and the five hundred copies that had been printed sold out rapidly.<sup>304</sup> Official institutions may have been offended, but this was part of the game. *Belles-Lettres* applauded: ‘M. Denis de Rougemont a élégamment saccagé la mare aux grenouilles de l’instruction publique. Les grenouilles sont hors d’elles.’<sup>305</sup> As early as 1930, Rougemont’s political argument was proved unfair.

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<sup>299</sup> For more details on the opposition between a ‘dominant’ and a ‘dominated’ pole in France in the interwar period, see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 103-161. See esp. definitions p.104-5. The ambition of ‘mapping out’ writers in the literary field gives a clearer idea of the stakes of literary debate, but there are inherent limitations to this methodology. First, the mapping should never be considered as a rigid divide, but only as a tool to position a writer in the literary context of the time. Second, it risks to underestimate the evolution in a writer’s thought and writings. Third, one may wonder if it does not explain away the writer’s personal motives in taking part in the literary debate.

<sup>300</sup> See his praises of Montherlant’s violent style in Denis de Rougemont, ‘Les Bestiaires’, *La semaine littéraire*, 1697 (10 Jul. 1926), 335; Denis de Rougemont, ‘Henri de Montherlant: *Les Bestiaires*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Sept. 1926), 397-8; Rougemont, ‘M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites’. In this last text, Rougemont asserted that Montherlant’s style excused the political and religious contents of his works: ‘il sera pardonné à Montherlant beaucoup de défauts bien agaçants pour sa souveraine désinvolture’ (P.397). On Aragon as a model of style: Rougemont, ‘Louis Aragon, le beau prétexte’, 131-44.; Denis de Rougemont, ‘Louis Aragon: *Le Paysan de Paris*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Jan. 1927), 123-4.; and Rougemont, ‘Aragon: *Traité du Style*’, 1034.

<sup>301</sup> Here, ‘romantic’ is to be understood in reference to Pierre Bénichou, *Le Temps des prophètes, Doctrines de l’âge romantique* (Paris, 1977).

<sup>302</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 159.

<sup>303</sup> Rougemont, ‘Louis Aragon: *Le Paysan de Paris*’, 123.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. ‘Edition des Lettres de Lausanne’, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 12 May 1929, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 123.

<sup>305</sup> ‘Distinctions’, *Revue de Belles-Lettres*, 8 (Sept. 1929), 255.

Rougemont had written that there could be no political will to reform the school because ‘l’école, sous sa forme actuelle, remplit suffisamment son rôle politique et social, qui est de fabriquer des électeurs (si possible radicaux, en tout cas démocrates).’<sup>306</sup> However, in 1930, the Education Department of the Canton of Neuchâtel implemented a pedagogical reform to allow more invention and initiative at school.<sup>307</sup> This reform showed the topicality of Rougemont’s pedagogical comments, and also perhaps the futility of his political overstatements.

In the 1930s, Switzerland was particularly challenged by the national(ist) character of education in neighbouring countries.<sup>308</sup> Rougemont congratulated the Swiss for taking the debate with a sense of humour: it conveyed ‘une légèreté nouvelle dans l’atmosphère de ce pays de pédagogues’.<sup>309</sup> The debate on the link between state(s) and school(s) has been open ever since; Rougemont’s interventions were particularly remarked in the 1970s.<sup>310</sup> It is worth noting that even when Rougemont became a prime defender of Swiss democracy (a change that occurred in 1937-8, as we shall see), he continued to denounce levelling down as one of the downsides of democracy (not unlike Alexis de Tocqueville): ‘La Suisse n’est pas démocratique pour avoir tardivement aboli ce que l’on nomme les privilèges, mais pour les avoir étendus, dès l’origine, au plus grand nombre.’<sup>311</sup> But in the 1920s, Rougemont was still far from such political understanding. He had no political commitment, nor did he seek one.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 144. The emphasis is his.

<sup>307</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 124.

<sup>308</sup> For the reaction of a French Swiss writer, see André Bonnard, ‘L’Ecole contre l’avenir’, *Présence*, 4, 7-15.

<sup>309</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘D’un humour romand’, *Les nouvelles littéraires*, 593 (24 Feb. 1934), 593.

<sup>310</sup> Rougemont repeatedly intervened against the intermingling of state and school (stigmatised as ‘La Trahison de l’instruction publique’ in *Les Méfaits* and further condemned in his 1972 ‘Suite des *Méfaits*’ – drawing on Ivan Illich, *Une société sans école* (1971), see Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 161-75.); see also ‘Le sort de l’an 2000 se joue dans nos écoles’, in Denis de Rougemont, *L’Avenir est notre affaire* (Paris, 1977), 329-31.

<sup>311</sup> Rougemont, *Suite neuchâteloise*, 24. See also the nuances brought to his *Méfaits* in ‘Tout Suisse est pédagogue’, Denis de Rougemont, *La Suisse ou l’histoire d’un peuple heureux* (1st edn. Paris, 1965), 254-8.

<sup>312</sup> This is also Ackermann’s conclusion, in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 59-152.

## **2. Continuity and rupture**

Having graduated from Neuchâtel University in January 1930, Rougemont was offered the post of secretary of a Protestant publishing house, Je Sers, to be launched in Paris by the Pastor Pierre Maury, whom Rougemont had met in 1929.<sup>313</sup> Ackermann has given a thorough account of Rougemont's move to Paris, as a break from his Swiss youth.<sup>314</sup> One could perhaps emphasise continuity as well as rupture. In particular, two enduring themes in Rougemont's literary production need to be singled out: firstly, the 'crisis of civilisation', which connects the 1920s with the 1930s, Neuchâtel with Paris, the humanities student with the personalist activist; secondly, the fact that Rougemont kept links with the French Swiss literary field when he moved to Paris.

### **The crisis of civilisation**

Personalism was the response that Rougemont and others developed in the 1930s, in answer to 'une crise totale de civilisation' already patent the late 1920s. This has been established by Loubet del Bayle already.<sup>315</sup> It is important to extend his analysis by examining the idea of 'crisis of civilisation'. To speak of a 'crisis of civilisation', one has to pick a set of values defining 'civilisation', and then prove their undermining. This often involves the description of a mythical past, when the chosen values were best embodied. Even if we could agree on what constitutes Western Europe, there would be no scientific formula for evaluating the undermining of values. Alternatively, to avoid reference to the past, one may define the 'crisis of civilisation' vis-à-vis the future. For instance, there would be 'crisis' when the civilisation in question would prove incompatible with life on earth in the long term. The

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<sup>313</sup> See ms. 'Idée d'une autobiographie', in Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, File: 'Inédits: Autobiographie'. See also Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 162-3.

<sup>314</sup> See 'Ruptures (1930-1932)', in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 153-247.

<sup>315</sup> Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, esp.29 and Chapter 5: 'Une crise totale de civilisation'. See also Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, 'Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française', *Nouvelle Revue des Deux Mondes*, 5 (1975), 320-35.

second approach has seemed more pertinent since the 1960s and 1970s, and Rougemont was instrumental in the debates on sustainable growth.<sup>316</sup>

In the interwar period, however, the ‘crisis of civilisation’ was defined largely vis-à-vis the past, in function of a set of values usually made explicit. The dispute focused on the values that (had) made civilisation(s). Unsurprisingly, the categories of debate remained hazy: myths of the West (‘Occident’) and East (‘Orient’) were mobilised across Europe; and these myths were protean and sometimes contradictory, in the interwar period as today.<sup>317</sup> The historian must recognise that people in 1930s Europe believed there was a crisis. In the aftermath of the First World War, and following the prophecies of Spengler, Keyserling, Hermann Hesse, and Ernst Robert Curtius, the ‘decadence’ of Western civilisation became a leitmotiv of much of European literature.<sup>318</sup> There were numerous other works which deplored the ‘crisis of civilisation’ or the ‘decline of Western Europe’.<sup>319</sup> Rougemont and the future personalists writers were but a part of an ongoing debate.

From the beginning, Rougemont proved particularly drawn to the moral or spiritual dimensions of the ‘crisis’. Reviewing Malraux’s *La Tentation de l’Occident* in 1926, he asserted that the crisis of Western civilisation started with atheism, materialism and

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<sup>316</sup> Rougemont, *L’Avenir est notre affaire*. In the late 1970s, Rougemont founded ECOROPA (ECOLOGIA-EUROPA). On this particular point, one may refer to Jean Jacob’s thesis (note that his interpretation of personalism and of the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’ is wrong, as I shall argue in Chapters 5 and 6): Jacob, *Le retour de "L’Ordre Nouveau"*, 99-171.

<sup>317</sup> For this reason, attempts to map out the debate in terms of an East vs. West divide have proved oversimplifying, even within one particular country and literary culture. Gisèle Sapiro who submitted such a model, admitted that René Guénon (a radical critic of modern materialism who looked to the East for a perennial spirituality long lost in Europe; author of *Orient et Occident*, 1924, and *La crise du monde moderne*, 1927), cannot fit into her model (P.147-8). Therefore, she limited her demonstration to Massis, Gide, and Malraux for the 1920s; see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 148-52.

<sup>318</sup> See Michel Trebitsch, ‘L’image de l’Orient chez les intellectuels français et allemands au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale’, in Etienne François (ed.) *Marianne-Germania. Deutsch-Französischer Kulturtransfer im europäischen Kontext (1790-1914)* (Leipzig, 1998).

<sup>319</sup> Among the works available in French at the turn of the 1930s: Norman Angell, *Le chaos européen* (1920); Albert Demangeon, *Déclin de l’Europe* (1920); Oswald Spengler, *Le déclin de l’Occident* (1922); Nicolas Berdiaev, *Un nouveau Moyen Age* (1924); Henri Massis, *Défense de l’Occident* (1925); Arnold Toynbee, *L’éclipse de l’Europe* (1926); André Malraux, *La tentation de l’Occident* (1926); René Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne* (1927); Karl Jaspers, *Situation spirituelle de notre époque* (1930); Daniel Halévy, *Le déclin de la liberté* (1931); Gaston Gaillard, *La fin d’un temps* (1932); Hermann Keyserling, *La révolution mondiale et la responsabilité de l’esprit* (1933).

positivism.<sup>320</sup> In 1927, in the *Revue de Belles-Lettres*, Rougemont described the modern ‘crisis’ as a cluster of ‘le triomphe de la Machine’, the Russian Revolution, the First World War, and above all ‘la sacro-sainte Raison utilitaire au service des sacro-saints Principes au nom desquels tout se ligue aujourd’hui pour anéantir la seule chose qui reste à nos yeux sacro-sainte: la liberté.’<sup>321</sup> The young Rougemont echoed the views of French writers such as Emmanuel Berl and Pierre Drieu la Rochelle.<sup>322</sup>

In 1928, Rougemont published an article on ‘Le péril Ford’, in the Protestant journal *Foi et Vie*.<sup>323</sup> It was banal to identify modernity with the United States, and the beginnings of the rationalisation of labour in Europe made Ford a common target.<sup>324</sup> Rougemont’s central argument was that materialism was leading ‘l’Occident’ towards a ‘désastre spirituel’.<sup>325</sup> His ignorance of economic problems did not prevent him from criticising greed: ‘Le héros de l’époque, c’est l’homme qui a réussi. Mais à quoi ?’<sup>326</sup> It was the intellectuals’ role to denounce the dead-end into which materialism was leading, and this implied that they end ‘le divorce de la pensée et de l’action’.<sup>327</sup> The themes touched upon in ‘Le péril Ford’, from materialism to the divorce between thought and action, would remain at the heart of Rougemont’s concerns throughout his life. This is not to say (as Rougemont did in the 1970s)

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<sup>320</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘André Malraux: *La tentation de l’Occident*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Dec. 1926), 811-12. Review of André Malraux, *La Tentation de l’Occident* (Paris, 1926).

<sup>321</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Conseils à la jeunesse’, *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)*, 6 (Mai 1927), 187.

<sup>322</sup> They wrote, in their short-lived publication *Les Derniers jours*: ‘un jour viendra où les hommes se révolteront contre le joug atrocement positiviste des Maurras et des Mussolini, des Lénine et des Ford. Alors les hommes hurleront un affreux besoin mystique.’, in ‘Première note sur le drame de l’*Action française*’, in *Les Derniers jours*, 1 (Feb. 1927), 8. Quoted in Denis de Rougemont, ‘Les Derniers Jours’, *Revue de Belles-Lettres (Neuchâtel)*, 8 (July 1927), 249-50.

<sup>323</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Le péril Ford’, *Foi et Vie*, 4, A (16 Feb. 1928), 189-202.

<sup>324</sup> In France, the United States was a common target of criticism, as Georges Duhamel illustrated in with his bestseller *Scènes de la vie future* published in 1930, see Duranton-Crabol, ‘De l’anti-américanisme en France vers 1930: la réception des *Scènes de la vie future*’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Jan-March 2001).

<sup>325</sup> Rougemont, ‘Le péril Ford’, 189.

<sup>326</sup> Rougemont, ‘Le péril Ford’, 192.

<sup>327</sup> Rougemont, ‘Le péril Ford’, 197.

<sup>328</sup> See ‘Le Péril Ford’ in Rougemont, *L’Avenir est notre affaire*, 173-9. This self-promotion as a prophet was a practice Rougemont developed, or let develop, in the 1960s.



that his article was prophetic.<sup>328</sup> The divorce between thought and action was already a commonplace for the 'generation of 1910' (and many other generations beforehand).<sup>329</sup>

In short, for Rougemont, there was a crisis of civilisation in the sense that one was constantly deterred from one's own spiritual quest, due to too many materialist preoccupations.<sup>330</sup> Literature was one of the means by which Rougemont sought to transcend his sense of the futility of utilitarian reason ('la sacro-sainte Raison utilitaire'). In the 1930s, Rougemont's literary reviews looked beyond style for the *raison d'être* of literature.<sup>331</sup>

## A Swiss writer in Paris

In 1930, Rougemont moved to Paris, the place he had been looking at throughout his student years as the 'lieu où se déroulait l'Aventure de l'esprit'.<sup>332</sup> This was not a radical rupture, especially since he continued to publish in Switzerland.

In the 1920s, the book market in French Switzerland was suffering from the increasing cost of paper and printing and the near impossibility of exporting Swiss production to neighbour countries touched by devaluation.<sup>333</sup> This climate encouraged several French Swiss publishers to move to Paris.<sup>334</sup> Therefore, there is nothing surprising in Pierre Maury's decision to start his Editions Je Sers in Paris. As for Rougemont, securing a job in publishing

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<sup>329</sup> E.g. 'Le Goût de l'action' (first chapter of) Agathon, *Les jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1913), quoted in Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 142.

<sup>330</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Daniel Rops: *Notre inquiétude*', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (April 1927), 564.

<sup>331</sup> His first review for the *NRF*, stated: 'Il n'est pas bon qu'un conteur laisse voir la moindre ironie vis-à-vis de ses personnages ; car il risque de les priver par là de cette autorité mystique, absolue et naïve où gît leur profonde raison d'être.', in Denis de Rougemont, "'Sarah", par Jean Cassou', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 218, 804-5.

<sup>332</sup> 'Sur l'automne 1932', Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 90.

<sup>333</sup> Roth and Vallotton, 'L'édition en Suisse romande de 1920 à 1970', 25.

<sup>334</sup> Young publishers, such as Constant Bourquin (Editions du Siècle) or Eugénie Droz, chose to launch and develop their business in Paris. Roth and Vallotton, 'L'édition en Suisse romande de 1920 à 1970', 26.

allowed him to move to Paris, and to remain dedicating to writing whilst avoiding mainstream journalism.

The move to Paris – from the provinces or in Rougemont’s case from abroad – did not always help literary success. It was tempting to seek fame through polemics. Provincial writers were a major recruitment pool for right-wing movements like the Action Française.<sup>335</sup> Robert Brasillach remembered his ignorance of the Parisian literary game when he moved to Paris.<sup>336</sup> Rougemont, by contrast, was already publishing in famous journals. He was well aware of the rules of the *NRF*, and thus avoided the mistakes that less informed writers were prone to make.

From the late 1920s onwards, Rougemont did not write in defence of a particular aesthetic, but according to a view that combined attachment to (Protestant) morality with admiration for the style of the new literary schools (especially the surrealists and *NRF* writers).<sup>337</sup> One of Rougemont’s lifelong concern was to keep a safe distance from the various poles of the literary field.<sup>338</sup> This implied a certain intellectual asceticism. In 1933, when ‘Je Sers’ went bankrupt and he was sacked, he preferred to move away from Paris and remain unemployed rather than to ‘give in’ journalism.

Whilst Rougemont moved to Paris, some of his Swiss friends reacted to French cultural centralism, and in particular to the imposition of ‘*l’esprit français*’ as a category of debate. In *L’Esprit de Genève* (1929), Robert de Traz depicted Geneva, and not Paris, as the cultural centre of Europe.<sup>339</sup> The young Swiss writers Pierre Beausire and Daniel Simond proved more rebellious in their polemical essay *D’un certain esprit français* (1930), published

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<sup>335</sup> E.g. Robert Brasillach, *Une Génération dans l’orage. Notre avant-guerre. Mémoires* (2nd edn. Paris, 1973), 41-42. See also Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 145-6.

<sup>336</sup> In Brasillach, *Notre avant-guerre*, 21.

<sup>337</sup> See his views on literary criticism in Denis de Rougemont, ‘Charles du Bos: *Approximations*’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (Nov. 1930), 657-8.

<sup>338</sup> One could draw a parallel with the ‘double figure’ of Léon Blum, literary critic and politician, in his distancing from the various poles of the literary field, see Charle, *Paris fin de siècle*, 163.

<sup>339</sup> Robert de Traz, *L’Esprit de Genève* (Lausanne, 1995).

in the same collection as Rougemont's *Méfaits*.<sup>340</sup> Rougemont reviewed their tract in *Aujourd'hui*, a determinedly French Swiss weekly edited by Ramuz.<sup>341</sup> He put forth a disillusioned view on the French literary field and the futility of its quarrels 'où tout le monde exagère, à qui mieux mieux dans le sens de la médiocrité française'.<sup>342</sup> Like Beausire and Simond, he condemned Barrès, Maurras, and the surrealists.<sup>343</sup> Rougemont delivered sharp criticism: 'En France, hélas ! une logique verbale et le clair génie que l'on sait se chargent de tout réduire à la raison, y compris la Révolution, thème rhétorique, y compris la Religion, thème catholique.'<sup>344</sup> Rougemont echoed these attacks in the *NRF*, more mildly.

For instance, Georges Duhamel, an established French essayist, embodied 'l'expression traditionnelle de la mauvaise humeur gauloise, héritage d'un classicisme nettement pessimiste'.<sup>345</sup> After his move to Paris, Rougemont kept an activity, albeit limited, in the Swiss avant-garde journals (*Les Cahiers de l'Anglore*, *Aujourd'hui* and *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*), which revived a literary and typographic avant-garde based on the model of Ramuz's *Cahiers vaudois*.<sup>346</sup> In 1930, Rougemont was instrumental in the launching of *Les Cahiers de l'Anglore*, with a group of young writers from the Zofingue student society of Geneva.<sup>347</sup> In 1932, he published in Lausanne *Le Paysan du Danube*, a collection of travel chronicles and a journal written during his stays abroad in Austria, Hungary and Germany in

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<sup>340</sup> Pierre Beausire and Daniel Simond, *D'un certain esprit français* (Lausanne, Petites Lettres de Lausanne, 1930); reviewed in Denis de Rougemont, 'Au sujet d'un certain esprit français', *Aujourd'hui*, 22 (1 May 1930), 4.

<sup>341</sup> *Aujourd'hui* was financed by Henry-Louis Mermod and directed by Ramuz, with the help of Gustave Roud (Dec. 1929-31), see Fornerod and Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', 244-5.

<sup>342</sup> Rougemont, 'Au sujet d'un certain esprit français', 4.

<sup>343</sup> Rougemont, 'Au sujet d'un certain esprit français', 4.

<sup>344</sup> Rougemont, 'Au sujet d'un certain esprit français', 4.

<sup>345</sup> 'Sujet de pastiche facile : décrire l'état d'esprit du Français moyen qui brandit son parapluie sous le nez de l'agent, invective les automobilistes, déclame au beau milieu de la chaussée des tirades généreusement libertaires, enrayer la circulation, « mais traverse dans les clous ».' Denis de Rougemont, "'Querelles de famille" par Georges Duhamel', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 224, 914-15.

<sup>346</sup> Roth and Vallotton, 'L'édition en Suisse romande de 1920 à 1970', 27.

<sup>347</sup> The group included: Pierre Ablaret, Paul-Georges Chevalley, Emile Duperrex, René Naville, Ernest Rogivue, Alec Thomas, Max-Marc Thomas, and Denis de Rougemont, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 133. See Fornerod and Francillon, 'La vie culturelle en Suisse romande de la Belle Epoque à 1939', 245. Rougemont published a poem and an article on the dangers of introspection for a writer: Denis de Rougemont, 'Miroirs (ou comment on perd Eurydice et soi-même)', *Les Cahiers de l'Anglore*, 1 (January 1930).

the late 1920s, and then in Paris from 1930.<sup>348</sup> Hence, the description of Rougemont as being more Parisian than the French is imbalanced.<sup>349</sup>

Thus, the most important change was not moving to Paris in 1930. It was the fact that the circles in which he moved were no longer interested in literature as such. By 1932, Rougemont was embarrassed by his romantic enthusiasm in *Le Paysan du Danube*. He wrote to his editor: 'je crains que mes amis, tant calvinistes-barthiens que révolutionnaires, ne trouvent ce petit recueil bien frivole et réactionnaire...'<sup>350</sup> Calvinist-Barthian and revolutionary circles had become the centres of Rougemont's activities. His concerns were more and more 'revolutionary' and 'existential'.

### **3. Revolution and existence**

Rougemont's Protestant commitment, already clear in the 1920s, developed from 1930 onwards, as Rougemont broke with liberal Protestantism, and followed the Barthian theological revolution. In the light of unpublished material, this section underlines the significance of Rougemont's contribution to intellectual history at the turn of the 1930s, when the French personalists coalesced into identifiable groups. This contribution was both theological and philosophical, with the introduction of Barth and of Kierkegaard in France.

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<sup>348</sup> Rougemont, *Le Paysan du Danube*; Denis de Rougemont, 'Un soir à Vienne avec Gérard', *La nouvelle semaine artistique et littéraire*, 7 (24 March 1928); Denis de Rougemont, 'Voyage en Hongrie I', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (October 1930); Denis de Rougemont, 'Voyage en Hongrie II', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (November 1930). I refer to Ackermann for an analysis of these literary pieces: Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 135-51.

<sup>349</sup> E.g. the historian Henri-Irénée Marrou, another personalist, addressed Rougemont in the following terms: 'Nous avons depuis longtemps édifié toute une métaphysique [...] sur votre présence savoureuse, à vous Suisses Romands, dans la culture française. [...] Vous êtes brachycéphale, brun, vous avez tout du celte ; que dis-je, *vous n'êtes pas seulement le plus français, mais le plus parisien de nous tous*. Il n'est pas jusqu'au nom sous lequel l'histoire vous a fait naître qui n'ait l'air d'un pseudonyme balzacien, tout à fait dans la tradition du Boulevard romantique.' in Henri Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', *Esprit*, 79 (Apr. 1939), 71-2. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>350</sup> Rougemont to Sven Stelling-Michaud, 11 May 1932, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 151.

## The Barthian theological revolution

It is crucial, in order to understand Rougemont's contribution to intellectual and cultural history, to give a concise account of the Barthian theological 'revolution' in the early to mid-1930s. This section anticipates on the chronology, in order to set the scene for the study of Rougemont's personalism that follows.

Rougemont was at the heart of the 'Barthian revolution' in France and French Switzerland.<sup>351</sup> Ackermann has described how Rougemont came to be involved in the Calvinist-Barthian circle in France.<sup>352</sup> What Barth emphasised, following St Paul, was that Christ alone has the fullest knowledge of God, and one participates in His knowledge through faith. The object of introducing Karl Barth to French speaking Protestants, theologians and philosophers was one of the main reasons for Rougemont's move to Paris in 1930.

In 1932, Rougemont, Henry Corbin, Roland de Pury, Albert-Marie Schmidt, and Roger Jézéquel (alias Roger Breuil), who were in their mid-twenties, launched a small Protestant journal, *Hic et Nunc*, with the support of the Pastor Pierre Maury. *Hic et Nunc* was published irregularly between November 1932 and January 1936,<sup>353</sup> with a circulation around four hundred copies.<sup>354</sup> Despite being a small publication, *Hic et Nunc* has rightly been given importance in the history of Protestant intellectuals as the first offensive of the Barthian theological revolution in France, as well as the expression of a Protestant 'non-conformisme des années trente'.<sup>355</sup> Rougemont, in charge of the practicalities, was the motor of the

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<sup>351</sup> On Barth in French, see the excellent analysis of Bernard Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945* (Lausanne, 1985).

<sup>352</sup> See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 153-88.

<sup>353</sup> There were nine issues in total (or eleven issues in the numbering: issues 3-4 (July 1933) and 9-10 (May 1935) were double).

<sup>354</sup> This number is based on the bill for the printing of the first issue of *Hic et Nunc*, by the Imprimerie A. Coueslant in Cahors, in the South-West of France – the biggest business in Cahors, with 150 workers in 1928, under the direction of a Huguenot entrepreneur, Auguste Coueslant (1868-1943). See bills in Rougemont's papers, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, file 'Hic et Nunc, I'. Reymond gave the number of eight hundred copies, in Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945*, 176.

<sup>355</sup> See Arnaud Baubérot, 'La revue *Hic et Nunc*: Les jeunes-turcs du protestantisme et l'esprit des années trente', *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 149 (July-Aug.-Sept.).

project.<sup>356</sup> From the start, Rougemont saw his contribution to *Hic et Nunc* as political.<sup>357</sup> He was aware that, strictly speaking, he was not a theologian. For this reason he could never be a strict Barthian. He was far too interested in literature, as well as in the moral questions raised by militant atheism.

At the turn of the 1930s, Rougemont became concerned with militant atheism, in particular the type of anti-religious stance intrinsic to communism. He got involved in a Protestant-Orthodox network of discussion on ‘l’athéisme international’, in the Parisian suburb of Issy-les-Moulineaux, where he was secretary to the Editions Je Sers. The backer of Je Sers, Hubert de Montbrisson, edited the weekly *Demain?* – subtitled ‘Bulletin mensuel d’information non politique concernant: les mouvements religieux, l’athéisme international, l’antireligion en URSS, “les forces nouvelles”’.<sup>358</sup> The editorial board included two Russian Orthodox émigrés (Professor N.N. Alexeiev<sup>359</sup> and N.A. Klépinine) and four Protestants: Hubert de Montbrisson, Henri Lauga (the managing editor of Je Sers), the future Pastor Emmanuel La Gravière, and Denis de Rougemont. This publication, which has never been the object of historical scrutiny, is an early ecumenical endeavour to give a religious answer to international ‘problems’:

Le but de nos Bulletins est la défense de la Foi devant l’athéisme militant [...]. Sur les feuillets de nos bulletins paraîtront côte à côte, les informations concernant l’athéisme militant et des renseignements sur tous les efforts créateurs tendant à « transfigurer », dans un esprit religieux, une situation du monde qui pose devant nos consciences de profonds et tragiques problèmes.<sup>360</sup>

In 1932, the chief target of the publication was international communism. Russian émigrés were instrumental in denouncing religious persecutions in the Soviet Union, as well

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<sup>356</sup> For example, he drafted a prospectus for the launching of *Hic et Nunc*, which was to be distributed to some 2000 subscribers of *Foi et Vie* and sponsors of the Je Sers publishing house. See manuscript notes and prospectus by Rougemont, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, file ‘Hic et Nunc, I’.

<sup>357</sup> His contribution is defined in political terms in the prospectus quoted above.

<sup>358</sup> See *Demain?*, 12-13 (March-Apr. 1933), 1. *Demain* was printed in Issy-les-Moulineaux, at the same address as the Editions Je Sers.

<sup>359</sup> Russian émigré, Professor of Orthodox Theology at the Saint Sergius Institute.

<sup>360</sup> ‘Avertissement’, *Demains*, 8-9 (Nov.-Dec. 1932), 3.

as the intrinsic anti-religious aim of the *Communist Manifesto*.<sup>361</sup> Rougemont was convinced, in January 1932, that the opposition between Marxism and Christianity was ‘le dilemme urgent de l’heure’.<sup>362</sup> This sense of urgency would motivate his unwavering anti-communism.<sup>363</sup>

Rougemont’s first article in *Hic et Nunc* started with a denunciation of politico-theological ‘hérésies’.<sup>364</sup> He argued forcefully that no abstract ‘god’ (whether the ‘Nation’, the ‘State’, or the ‘Class’) could ever be invoked to justify the altogether too real deaths of people (in war in particular): ‘Le dieu-nation respire la bonne odeur d’onze millions de morts sacrifiés en quatre ans à sa gloire. Moins redoutable, en apparence, le dieu-production se contente des macérations de 70 millions de chômeurs, et de super-holocaustes annuels de blé, de coton et d’obus.’<sup>365</sup> Rougemont’s conclusion gave ‘la seule attitude politique que puisse adopter le protestant’: ‘la politique du pessimisme actif, – ou si l’on veut de l’activisme sans illusions.’<sup>366</sup> ‘Active pessimism’ would become his lifelong motto.<sup>367</sup> Rougemont held that disillusion as to the value of the result – if not the act itself – was the best incentive to action. This position was consistent with Kierkegaard’s conception of faith as subjective self-commitment maintained in the face of intellectual uncertainty or paradox, and this is why Rougemont thought that ‘active pessimism’ was fundamentally a Protestant attitude.

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<sup>361</sup> On this, see Gareth Stedman Jones’s recent introduction to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, 2002), 1-187.

<sup>362</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘“Les signes parmi nous” par C.F. Ramuz’, *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 220 (Jan. 1932), 144.

<sup>363</sup> Rougemont’s analysis was enlarged to ‘totalitarian’ regimes in 1934-5, as we shall see in Chapter 6, and it underlies Rougemont’s keen involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the significant, if controversial, role he played in Cold War politics. See Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris 1950-1975* (Paris, 1995).

<sup>364</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Principe d’une politique du pessimisme actif’, *Hic et Nunc*, 1 (Nov. 1932), 24-8.

<sup>365</sup> Rougemont, ‘Principe d’une politique du pessimisme actif’, 28.

<sup>366</sup> Rougemont, ‘Principe d’une politique du pessimisme actif’, 27.

<sup>367</sup> This was also the motto of William of Orange or William the Silent (1533-84): ‘One need not hope in order to undertake; nor succeed in order to persevere’ (‘Point n’est besoin d’espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer’).

In the following issues of *Hic et Nunc*, Rougemont wrote humorous notes, as well as serious articles on Barth.<sup>368</sup> *Hic et Nunc* was provocative, thereby allowing young authors to gain notoriety rapidly, but also contributing to revitalize the theological scene of French Protestantism.<sup>369</sup> It was through the publicity *Hic et Nunc* made for it that dialectical theology became known in France.

Rougemont was instrumental in the translation and publication of Karl Barth in French, through the Editions Je Sers.<sup>370</sup> In 1934-5, Rougemont worked on the translation of the first volume of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, with Pierre Maury. Although Rougemont completed the translation of volume I.1, it was never published as such because Maury was not satisfied with it.<sup>371</sup> The German used by Barth is notoriously difficult; one may surmise that Rougemont's literary inclinations did not do justice to Barth's theological preciseness. Volume I, 1 of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* stated that *the* criterion for dogmatics was the Word of God.<sup>372</sup> This was a radical theological statement, which ruled out the possibility of theologising from a philosophical, or speculative standpoint. Writing in *Hic et Nunc* at the time when he was translating Barth, Rougemont asserted that dialectical theology could be an instrument for interpreting Kierkegaard (his main source of inspiration, as I shall argue), and

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<sup>368</sup> For his most 'Barthian' article, see Denis de Rougemont, 'Dialectique des fins dernières', *Hic et Nunc*, 3-4. See also the humorous 'Vocabulaire' section, which recalls Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* and Léon Bloy's *Exégèse des lieux communs*. For a brief analysis of Rougemont's contribution to French Protestant thought in *Hic et Nunc*, see Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945*, 70-3. For more quotations, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 222-47.

<sup>369</sup> On the relative intellectual lethargy of Protestant theology in the 1920s, see Patrick Harismendy, 'Les intellectuels protestants français dans les années 20', in Pierre Colin (ed.) *Intellectuels chrétiens et esprit des années vingt* (Paris, 1997), 64-5. See also, on the largest Protestant movement in 1930s France and one of the chief targets of Barthians, Jean Baubérot, 'Le Christianisme social français de 1882 à 1940: évolution et problèmes (suite et fin)', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, LXVII, 2 (Apr.-June 1987), 163-79.

<sup>370</sup> *Je Sers* published Karl Barth, *Credo* (Translated by Pierre Jundt and Jean Jundt, *Ecrivains religieux contemporains*. Paris/ Geneva, 1936); Karl Barth, *Le Culte raisonnable* (Translated by Pierre Maury, Roland de Pury, and Jean Bosc, *Ecrivains religieux étrangers*. Paris, 1934); Karl Barth, *Parole de Dieu et Parole humaine* (Translated by Pierre Maury and Auguste Lavanchy. Paris, 1933). The last book was published with *Labor et Fides* in Geneva, after the bankruptcy of *Je Sers*.

<sup>371</sup> After the war, Rougemont's work, revised by Maury and F. Ryser, was used for the first two booklets of Karl Barth, *Dogmatique* (transl. F. Ryser, Genève, 1953). On Rougemont's translation, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 400-1; Karl Barth and Pierre Maury, *Nous qui pouvons encore parler... Correspondance 1928-1956* (Translated by Bernard Reymond. Lausanne, 1985), 69 (esp. Reymond's notes p.69n.132 and p.201n.487).

<sup>372</sup> Although Barth insisted that it can never be the case that the Word of God is confined to the proclamation of the Church, in a famous passage: 'God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog. We do well to listen to Him if He really does.' Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics, I. The doctrine of the word of God* (Translated by G.W. Bromiley. vol. 1. Edinburgh, 1975), 55.



for correcting 'le mouvement naturel et perversi de nos pensées'.<sup>373</sup> Barth provided Rougemont with an interpretative framework to read Kierkegaard, and Rougemont was able to draw on dialectical theology without being a theologian in the strict sense.

Rougemont debated dialectical theology with the circle of young pastors and Protestant writers gathered by Pierre Maury.<sup>374</sup> Rougemont also worked on the classical texts of Protestantism: he translated Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, claiming to use Calvin's style, which he much admired.<sup>375</sup> The book – particularly topical in Rougemont's view – was published in 1937, with a preface by André Jundt, the French specialist on Lutheran dogmatics.<sup>376</sup> Throughout the 1930s, Rougemont published in French and French Swiss Protestant journals (*Foi et Vie*, *Le Semeur* and *Cahiers Protestants*), and he gave lectures in French and French Swiss Protestant conferences, youth gatherings and round tables. This suggests how integrated and active Rougemont was in European Protestantism.<sup>377</sup>

Most of the sympathisers of Barth in France before 1945 came to dialectical theology for pastoral reasons.<sup>378</sup> Rougemont and Henry Corbin – who were close friends – were the two important exceptions to this rule: they found in Barth the answer to intellectual, if

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<sup>373</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Les trois temps de la parole', *Hic et Nunc*, 9-10 (May 1935), 152-8. Page 153, Rougemont wrote: 'entre le Christ et nous, il n'y a pas 19 siècles ; mais une éternité ; il n'y a pas une certaine quantité de temps et d'histoire, mais l'abîme absolu d'une différence de qualité ; il n'y a pas une distance, mais une rupture – notre péché.' I shall come back to Rougemont's conception of history in Chapter 7.

<sup>374</sup> See esp. Maury's description of fruitful theological discussions with Rougemont's friends (Maury to Karl Barth, 23 April 1934), in Barth and Maury, *Nous qui pouvons encore parler... Correspondance 1928-1956*, 58.

<sup>375</sup> See esp. his preface in Martin Luther, *Traité du serf arbitre* (Translated by Denis de Rougemont. Paris, Genève, 1937).

<sup>376</sup> André Jundt (1877-1947) had written his doctoral thesis on *Le Développement de la pensée religieuse de Luther jusqu'en 1517* (Paris, 1905), and taught Lutheran dogmatics at the Faculty of Protestant Theology of Paris between 1929 and 1943.

<sup>377</sup> See the analysis of Rougemont's Protestant connections and the chapter: 'L'intellectuel et la chrétienté', in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 222-47, 377-405.

<sup>378</sup> Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945*, 75.

‘existential’, questions.<sup>379</sup> Corbin was an early translator of Heidegger and of Sufi mystics into French. Together with Rougemont, he played a significant role in making dialectical theology known in philosophical circles. Both Corbin and Rougemont developed a selective reading of Barth. They grew increasingly critical of the ‘narrow-mindedness’ of Barthians, who seemed concerned with theology and nothing else. This is very little known and will receive fuller consideration in my final chapter. Suffice it to say here that Rougemont would never limit his writings to theological questions; he was never an orthodox Barthian.

It is worth noting that Barth avoided using the term ‘person’ in his dogmatics. Whereas Barth explicitly rejected the very term ‘person’ (even in the doctrine of the Trinity), Rougemont would come to use Barth as a complement to personalism.<sup>380</sup> Like Barth, he interpreted and appropriated Kierkegaard’s philosophy of existence.

## A philosophy of existence

As early as October 1931, Rougemont called for a philosophy of personal existence: ‘Si l’existence – le degré d’être – se mesure au pouvoir d’incarner sa vérité, le mal du siècle c’est l’impuissance [...] c’est d’une philosophie de l’existence personnelle qu’avant tout nous avons besoin.’<sup>381</sup> To incarnate one’s own truth and to develop a philosophy of personal existence, Rougemont called on Søren Kierkegaard, on ‘Karl Barth, génial disciple du

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<sup>379</sup> To illustrate their friendship, see the dedication: ‘Pour mon vieil ami Denis de Rougemont ceci, attestant nos années d’ "existence" ensemble ! Très fraternellement, Henry Corbin’, in BPUN, Fonds Rougemont, 21R C33 : Martin Heidegger, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique? Suivi d’extraits sur l’être et le temps et d’une conférence sur Hölderlin* (Translated by Henry Corbin, Les Essais. vol. VII. Paris, 1938). Also: ‘A Cigogne [nickname of Rougemont’s first wife Simone] et Denis de Rougemont leur ami, qui persiste en Suhrawardî, Henry Corbin’, in BPUN, Fonds Rougemont, 21R DD2 : Henry Corbin, ‘Suhrawardî d’Alep (+ 1191) fondateur de la doctrine illuminative (ishrâqî)’, *Publications de la société des études iraniennes*, 16 (1939).

<sup>380</sup> For example, Rougemont commented Barth’s article (in *Foi et vie*, (August-Oct. 1936), 495-6) as follows: ‘Ce qu’il dit de l’expression « Fils de Dieu » (unique) permettant les expressions « enfants » et « fils de Dieu » particulières et innombrables vaut aussi pour Personne (Incarnation) et personnes (incarnation).’, Manuscript note: ‘Personnalisme et christianisme’, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: ‘I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934’.

<sup>381</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘“Les éléments de la grandeur humaine”, par Rudolf Kassner’, *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 217 (Oct. 1931), 640.

Danois', as well as on Nietzsche.<sup>382</sup> Rougemont was one of the first French-speaking writers to mention Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence. This is one of Rougemont's little known contributions to intellectual history.

In January 1932, Rougemont claimed that a philosophy of existence was incompatible with Marxism. Communism may have been a generous idea, but it remained a brutal theory. Rougemont explained why in the new French Swiss avant-garde journal *Présence*.<sup>383</sup> The discourse about building socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, meant the death of independent thought: '*réaliser une pensée, ce n'est pas la « mettre à exécution », – la condamner à mort, autant dire, et l'extirper de son être, fût-ce pour l'introduire dans l'Histoire. Mais c'est au contraire devenir cette idée.*'<sup>384</sup> Rougemont's article, significantly entitled 'Penser avec les mains', gave the lineaments of what eventually became a chief personalist essay.<sup>385</sup>

From 1932, Rougemont played a role (which remains unclear) in the translation of Kierkegaard by the Franco-Danish Association in Paris.<sup>386</sup> An acknowledgement of 1942 mentions, 'depuis 1932', the support of the Rask-Oersted fund and the Franco-Danish Association, 'qui, sous la direction et sur l'initiative de Robert de Traz, André Babelon et Denis de Rougemont, avait décidé d'entreprendre une publication collective des œuvres de Sören Kierkegaard'.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Rougemont, "'Les éléments de la grandeur humaine", par Rudolf Kassner', 640-3; Denis de Rougemont, "'Eloge de l'imprudence" par Marcel Jouhandeau', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 228 (Sept. 32), 442-4.

<sup>383</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', *Présence*, 1 (Jan. 1932), 37-41. *Présence* was edited by Gilbert Trollet, a contemporary of Rougemont, between 1932 and 1936.

<sup>384</sup> Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', 40. The emphasis is Rougemont's.

<sup>385</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains* (1st edn. Paris, 1936).

<sup>386</sup> The Franco-Danish association had been founded in 1918 by André Honnorat (1868-1950), a French politician famous for passing laws that allowed the reduction of tuberculosis in France (esp. 1914-19). I have not been able to locate its archives.

<sup>387</sup> Quote from *Ou bien...Ou bien...* (Paris, 1942), XIX, in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 377.

According to Bruno Ackermann, Rougemont was not primarily concerned with Kierkegaard as a philosopher.<sup>388</sup> Admittedly, Rougemont used Kierkegaard as a guide for Christian action, and this Protestant reading of Kierkegaard is what distinguishes his interpretation from those of other French philosophers, such as Jean Wahl for example.<sup>389</sup> But it is also important to note that Rougemont understood the philosophical significance of Kierkegaard. For instance, in his article in *Présence*, Rougemont referred to Kierkegaard's *Concluding unscientific postscript to philosophical fragments*, then still unknown in French.<sup>390</sup> His presentation allowed different interpretations: 'l'incarnation de la pensée' meant to live by simple principles, whether secular or the words of the Gospel.<sup>391</sup>

In the following years, Rougemont used Kierkegaard to counteract Hegelian philosophy (which was to become central in French philosophy in the 1930s, following Alexandre Kojève's seminar at the Sorbonne between 1933 and 1939) and to promote personalism. Rougemont's Protestant reading of Kierkegaard is an early manifestation of a philosophy of existence in France and French Switzerland, which has since been overshadowed by subsequent French existentialisms.

In short, this chapter has painted the portrait of the young Rougemont as a Swiss Protestant writer. Surprisingly well integrated in the Swiss and Parisian literary fields, considering his age and lack of family connections, Rougemont stood out as one of the most promising young writers with spiritual concerns at the end of the 1930s. His political commitment came after literary and moral or 'existential' preoccupations. As Rougemont himself admitted towards the end of his life:

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<sup>388</sup> See his analysis in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 377-84.

<sup>389</sup> Jean Wahl (1888-1974), philosopher and poet, professor at the Sorbonne from 1936, became one of the most influential philosophers in France after the war. He was instrumental in establishing Kierkegaard as the father of existentialism. See the articles and conferences from the 1930s to the 1960s, published as Jean Wahl, *Kierkegaard, L'un devant l'autre* (1998).

<sup>390</sup> In those years, Rougemont read and annotated a compilation of Kierkegaard's text in German, see his copy of Søren Kierkegaard, *Religion der Tat, Sein Werk in Auswahl* (Translated by Eduard Geismar. Leipzig, 1930). In Bibliothèque Publique et Universtaire de Neuchâtel, 21R C66. Ten years later, *Concluding unscientific postscript to philosophical fragments* would come out in French: Søren Kierkegaard, *Post-scriptum aux miettes philosophiques* (Translated by Paul Petit. Paris, 1941).

<sup>391</sup> Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', 40.

Au fond de moi-même je me définis avant tout comme un écrivain. [...] C'était tout naturel pour moi de passer de l'écriture littéraire à l'écriture littéraire au service d'une cause, en restant parfaitement libre. [...] J'estime que c'est le devoir absolu d'un écrivain de représenter l'esprit critique. Je crois que ce n'est pas du tout trahir ma vocation littéraire [...] mais c'est simplement la faire servir à l'intérêt général.<sup>392</sup>

In this way, Rougemont went from literature to literature at the service of a revolutionary cause. Rougemont may have aspired to philosophy of existence and to political theory, but he continued to write in the mode of *belles-lettres*. His commitment as a mediator between the personalist movements and the literary avant-garde followed on from his promising career as a young Swiss writer.

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<sup>392</sup> Denis de Rougemont, oral interview [early 1980s], in radio broadcast by Nancy Ipsilantis, '*Profil Perdu, Denis de Rougemont, 1906-1985*', Co-Production France Culture et Radio Suisse Romande Espace 2, second part, 25 March 1993, 6.30-7.30 pm. In Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Ferme de Dorigny, Lausanne.

## Chapter 3. Pluralisation of personalism

In the 1930s, France was the scene of a permanent ‘pluralisation of personalism’, in Thomas Keller’s words.<sup>393</sup> Personalism began as the ON doctrine, *Esprit* followed two or three years later, and then some *Esprit* groups continued the process of diversification of personalism. This sequence is still not established firmly. It remains difficult to establish because Emmanuel Mounier (and *Esprit* in general) did not acknowledge his indebtedness to ON. After officially breaking from ON in 1934, he let the rumour develop that he was the inventor of personalism in France.

The present chapter outlines the stages of development of personalism(s) in France, and thereby invalidates definitively the cliché that personalism was invented by a young generation of Catholic thinkers in France. At first, personalism coincided with the formation of the ON group, up to 1934, when *Esprit* started to develop a personalism of its own, and when other types of personalism also began to emerge in France. The events of February 1934 mark a turning-point for French personalism (as for French politics in general). Following the events, *Esprit* turned towards the left, while ON kept its ‘neither right nor left’ line. The importance of the split of 1934 should not be overestimated, however: there were tensions between *Esprit* and ON before, and contacts were maintained afterwards. The study of Rougemont as a mediator allows to understand the complexity and nuances in the relations between the various personalist groups. Through Rougemont, it is possible to examine four different types of ‘French’ personalism.

### 1. *Ordre Nouveau and the origins of personalism*

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<sup>393</sup> ‘Die Pluralisierung des Personalismus’ in Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 11, 343-89. Transl. Christian Roy.

The ON group, which took shape between 1931 and 1932, was the first to formulate a personalist doctrine in France, in the journal *Plans*, at a time when *Esprit* was only a vague idea. Focussing on the adhesion of Denis de Rougemont to the ON group, my research shows how ON was neither formally organised nor cohesive before 1933.

## **The shaping of the Ordre Nouveau group (1930-1932)**

At the turn of the 1930s, Rougemont and the future personalists were looking for a platform to voice spiritual and moral concerns regarding contemporary issues.<sup>394</sup> Christian Roy has shown that ON was born of Alexandre Marc's desire to combine two of his activities: political activism for European unity and world peace, on the one hand, and ecumenical discussions between dedicated Catholic and Orthodox Christians (Protestants would join later), on the other.<sup>395</sup> Some of the most prominent theologians of the time participated to the ecumenical discussions in Paris.<sup>396</sup>

The core of the ON group consisted of Marc's personal contacts from Sciences Po (where he had been a student) and from the ecumenical discussion group.<sup>397</sup> Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu joined the discussions in February 1931.<sup>398</sup> The circumstances in which

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<sup>394</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 93.

<sup>395</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 23-211.

<sup>396</sup> From the Catholic side, regular attendants included the abbé Daniel Lallemand and the philosopher Gabriel Marcel, and it seems that Henri de Lubac, who was to play a key role in Vatican II, also participated. The Orthodox were represented by Father Lev Gillet (a former French Benedictine monk who signed 'Un moine de l'Eglise d'Orient'), Eugraphe Kovalevski (who would launch a controversial Eglise Catholique Orthodoxe de France after the war), as well as the Russian religious thinkers Sergii Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev. There were no Protestants in the first series of meetings. Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 41-3, 103-4.

<sup>397</sup> They also included some of the former 'Amis du Sohlberg'. On the Sohlberg, see above and Rita Thalmann, 'Du cercle du Sohlberg au comité France-Allemagne: une évolution ambiguë de la coopération franco-allemande', in Bock, Meyer-Kalkus, and Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, 67-8.

<sup>398</sup> See esp. Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 48.

Rougemont first met Marc remain unclear.<sup>399</sup> Rougemont remembered reading an ON manifesto (written by Marc) in the salon of Charles du Bos at Versailles, and being struck by the expression: ‘NI INDIVIDUALISTES NI COLLECTIVISTES, NOUS SOMMES PERSONNALISTES!’<sup>400</sup> Rougemont overemphasised ‘personalism’ in his recollection (it was only one slogan among many).<sup>401</sup> The ON motto already appeared, however: ‘SPIRITUEL D’ABORD, ÉCONOMIQUE ENSUITE, POLITIQUE À LEUR SERVICE’.<sup>402</sup>

In the Spring of 1931, as Marc circulated the ON manifesto, the ‘Centre d’études de l’Ordre Nouveau’ started to organise discussions on topical issues. The discussions were held at the home of a participant, and did not imply any form of commitment.<sup>403</sup> Rougemont’s correspondence allows to trace back the circumstances in which he became acquainted with the ON as a group. On 5 June 1931, Rougemont wrote a professional letter to Marc (regarding the edition of a French translation of Kierkegaard by the Editions Je Sers) and concluded expressing a personal interest in the Ordre Nouveau: ‘Je serais, d’autre part, personnellement très content de vous revoir et de reparler de vos projets concernant "L’Ordre Nouveau"’.<sup>404</sup> In a post-scriptum, he added that he had received an invitation to the ON meeting the following

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<sup>399</sup> Rougemont remembered meeting Alexandre Marc for the first time at the literary salon of Charles du Bos in Versailles, where Marc showed him the first manifesto of ON. Rougemont, *Journal d’une époque*, 93. Marc remembered having first met Rougemont in the context of an ecumenical discussion: ‘ayant cherché un jeune protestant capable d’exposer le point de vue de ses coreligionnaires, je suis allé solliciter le pasteur Max Dominicé, qui m’a recommandé deux jeunes hommes “qui promettaient”: le futur pasteur Roland de Pury et Denis de Rougemont.’ Alexandre Marc, ‘Rougemont fantassin de l’idée européenne’, *Le Journal de Genève*, (10 Dec. 1985), 1. On another occasion, Marc maintained that he met Rougemont ‘par le truchement d’un jeune protestant d’origine ouvrière, André Moosmann, et du pasteur Max Dominicé (alors, en poste à Belleville)’. Marc, ‘Vers une lumière qui ne s’éteint jamais’, 64.

<sup>400</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d’une époque*, 93.

<sup>401</sup> ‘TRADITIONALISTES mais NON CONSERVATEURS, RÉALISTES, mais NON OPPORTUNISTES, RÉVOLUTIONNAIRES, mais NON RÉVOLTÉS, CONSTRUCTEURS, mais NON DESTRUCTEURS, ni BELLICISTES, ni PACIFISTES, PATRIOTES, mais NON NATIONALISTES, SOCIALISTES, mais NON MATÉRIALISTES, PERSONNALISTES, mais NON ANARCHISTES, HUMAINS, mais NON HUMANITAIRES.’, The manifesto, entitled ‘*Ordre Nouveau – Appel*’, was dated 31 March 1931, quoted in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 45-7. The same series of slogans defining the ON was published in ‘L’Action. I. “L’Ordre Nouveau”’, *Plans*, 9 (Nov. 1931).

<sup>402</sup> ON manifesto, quoted in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 47. The same series of slogans defining the ON was published in ‘L’Action. I. “L’Ordre Nouveau”’. See analysis in Chapter 5.

<sup>403</sup> A summary of these early discussions is given by Christian Roy, on the basis of Marc’s diaries, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 195-210.

<sup>404</sup> Rougemont to Marc, 5 June 1931, quoted in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 44.



Monday (8 June 1931).<sup>405</sup> Rougemont's letter dates his first participation in ON discussions from June 1931.

His involvement became concrete a year later, as he gathered contributions for the 'Cahier de revendications' of 'revolutionary youth', published by *La Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF)*.<sup>406</sup> Rougemont then acted as a mediator between the famous literary institution and ON writers.

Correspondence regarding the *NRF* project shows that, in 1932, it was unclear who was a full ON member and who was simply attending discussions organised by the ON group. The ambience of this embryonic yet decidedly revolutionary grouping was tense, as letters to Rougemont suggest. On 9 November 1932, Daniel-Rops wrote to Jacques Naville, who was officially president of ON, to complain that he had not been asked to write for *NRF* as other ON members.<sup>407</sup> His letter points at the lack of trust and communication among the early ON group. Writing again to Rougemont on 13 November, Daniel-Rops emphasised Rougemont's recent involvement in ON (he called Rougemont the 'dernier venu au groupe'), and blamed the other members for not saying a word to him about their articles for *NRF*.<sup>408</sup>

Since ON was not a formal structure, Jacques Naville drew a list of the official members to Rougemont: 'Le « groupe de l'Ordre Nouveau », c.à.d. : M.M. Aron, Dandieu, Rey, Poncet, Lapie, Naville, Lipiansky, D. de Rougemont, Jardin, Dupuis, Daniel-Rops, présents ou excusés le Samedi 15 octobre dans le cabinet de [Maître] Lapie, le Dimanche 23

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<sup>405</sup> This meeting could match with Marc's memories of a debate at Pierre-Olivier Lapie's home on 7 June 1931, at which the writer Daniel-Rops discussed part of his *Le Monde sans âme* (an essay published in 1932). On Marc's memories of the meeting of 7 June 1931, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 202.

<sup>406</sup> See Chapters 1 and 4.

<sup>407</sup> Moreover, Daniel-Rops found 'inadmissible qu'une des premières manifestations en public de l'Ordre Nouveau soit laissée à la décision indépendante des membres. Il me paraît en conséquence évident que, dans ce témoignage, chacun des membres ne saurait engager que sa responsabilité propre', Daniel-Rops to Jacques Naville, 9 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>408</sup> Daniel-Rops to Rougemont, 13 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

octobre à mon domicile, le mardi 25 octobre à mon domicile'.<sup>409</sup> This list is the only document that gives the core ON group for the autumn 1932.

The ON group was far from cohesive. Alexandre Marc informed Rougemont it was not the first time it faced tensions and quarrels.<sup>410</sup> The violent tone of his letters indicates a revolutionary cell. On 13 November 1932, Rey, Lapie, Naville and Poncet resigned from ON.<sup>411</sup> In the following year, Marc would also come to exclude the leaders of *Plans*, *Mouvements* and *Esprit*, three journals with which ON successively cooperated. Thereafter, the official list of 'founding fathers' of ON included, by alphabetical order: Dominique Ardouint (Jean Jardin's ON pseudonym), Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, René Dupuis, Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont.<sup>412</sup> This 'Comité Directeur' of ON (which was meant to define the doctrine of the movement) only included the members that remained after the split of November 1932, plus Claude Chevalley who joined ON at the end of 1932.<sup>413</sup>

If one compares the list of ON members given by Naville in November 1932 with the official list of the 'Comité Directeur' in 1934, it becomes clear that the core of the ON group was formed in November-December 1932. A second wave would join ON in the following years, including Pierre Prévost, Eugénia Hélice, Xavier de Lignac, Albert and Louis Ollivier.

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<sup>409</sup> Jacques Naville to Rougemont, 10 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>410</sup> 'La « crise » que nous traversons n'est pas la première. Elle ne sera pas la dernière. Considérons donc la situation avec calme & ne nous laissons pas décourager. Malgré l'engagement pris par tous les membres de l'O.N., les calomnies ont repris. D.R. [Daniel-Rops], mal informé (par G.R. [Gabriel Rey] & P.-O. L. [Pierre-Olivier Lapie]) est très monté contre toi & surtout contre moi. Nous avons décidé de déléguer auprès de lui R.D. [René Dupuis] & J.J. [Jean Jardin]. Il faut que D.R. [Daniel-Rops] soit avec nous, de même que le grand Arnaud [Dandieu], pour que nous puissions, cette fois, vider l'abcès...en vidant, au besoin, G.R. [Gabriel Rey] de l'O.N. Il est indispensable de découvrir la source de toutes les calomnies & de les faire rentrer, à coups de poing, dans la gorge de ceux qui les inventent.', Alexandre Marc to Rougemont, 12 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>411</sup> 'Après deux années d'expériences consciencieuse et approfondie [sic], nous sommes arrivées [sic] à cette conclusion, au cours de deux récents entretiens, que l'Ordre Nouveau est un mouvement plein d'équivoques et de contradictions internes auxquelles il ne nous est plus possible dorénavant de collaborer. Veuillez trouver ici notre démission. [...] Signé : P.O. Lapie; J. Naville; A. Poncet; G. Rey.' 'Lettre destinée aux membres du Groupe de l'Ordre Nouveau par laquelle les signataires donnent leur démission de ce groupe', 13 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>412</sup> See 'Comment est né l'ordre nouveau', in the special publicity issue '*Nous voulons...L'Ordre Nouveau*', *Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 2.

<sup>413</sup> This young mathematician – the second Protestant at ON with Rougemont – was a friend of Georges Bataille and Arnaud Dandieu (who were colleagues at the Bibliothèque Nationale).

By gathering contributions for *NRF* in the Autumn of 1932, Rougemont played a part, albeit unwitting, in the crystallization of the ON group.<sup>414</sup> Having defined the participants to ON, it is important to show that they were the first to call upon personalism as a political philosophy and a social movement.

### **Early statements of Ordre Nouveau personalism (1931-1932)**

Initially, ON developed its positions in the journal *Plans*. Officially aimed at the young generation, *Plans* had been conceived by Philippe Lamour in 1928 (following his exclusion from the Faisceau of Georges Valois).<sup>415</sup> *Plans* was published between January 1931 and February 1933. It had two parts: a theoretical section called ‘idéologique’, and a practical part publishing facts and documents.<sup>416</sup> For a period of about a year, between the summers of 1931 and of 1932, the theoretical section was largely concerned with ON.

It is generally assumed that ON started for the broader public with an article by René Dupuis published in the journal *Plans* in July 1931, calling for a European union to achieve peace on the Continent.<sup>417</sup> Then, in the November issue, Daniel-Rops put forward a Catholic version of ON, while Aron and Dandieu called for ‘violence et révolution’, defending a Nietzschean interpretation.<sup>418</sup> Aron and Dandieu claimed that a revolution was only bloody when ill-prepared, and that the blood shed by a revolution was the sign of its concrete imperfection. This ON principle (repeated in *Plans* by Marc in March 1932, and by Rougemont in May of the same year) motivated a fastidious doctrinal preparation of the ON revolution: ‘la violence spirituelle ou doctrinale’ – i.e. rigorous doctrinal research and the

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<sup>414</sup> See further details in Chapter 4.

<sup>415</sup> See Sylvie Guillaume, ‘*Plans* et la révolution collective’, in Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995), 197-207.

<sup>416</sup> Marie-Christine Bouneau-Bouillare, ‘Hubert Lagardelle, un bourgeois révolutionnaire et son époque (1874-1958)’ (thèse de doctorat, Université de Bordeaux III, 1996), 691-714.

<sup>417</sup> René Dupuis, ‘Le Problème de l'Europe et la question de l'Etat’, *Plans*, 7 (July 1931), 11-16.

<sup>418</sup> Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, ‘Violence et révolution’, *Plans*, 9 (Nov. 1931), 24-8; Daniel-Rops, ‘Abstraction et spiritualité’, *Plans*, 9 (Nov. 1931), 35-40.

refusal to compromise with other political movements – was supposed to guarantee a well-prepared revolution and reduce physical violence as much as possible.<sup>419</sup>

In 1931, Alexandre Marc and Arnaud Dandieu called upon a ‘personnalisme créateur’ in conclusion to their joint article ‘Misère et grandeur du spirituel’.<sup>420</sup> Marc and Dandieu refused to provide the reader with a rational (Cartesian) definition of the person, which would reduce the subject – the person – to an object. Marc and Dandieu drew a distinction between the ‘Cartesian’ and the ‘concrete’ from Gabriel Marcel’s *Journal métaphysique* (1927).<sup>421</sup> Although ‘Misère et grandeur du spirituel’ was only published in France in 1974, it may still be considered to be the first expression of personalism as a non-idealistic philosophy in French.<sup>422</sup> In *Plans* in December 1931, Marc made a strong point: ‘Personnalisme: primauté de l’homme sur la Société’.<sup>423</sup> This was the first presentation of personalism *per se*.

Thus personalism appeared as the doctrine whereby the particular human person would be given unconditional preference over the general (and therefore theoretical) society. It is important to note that when Denis de Rougemont actively joined ON, the lineaments of the doctrine that was starting to be called ‘personnalisme’ had already been established (by Marc, Dandieu, Aron, and Dupuis especially). It is important to remember that Rougemont played little if no role in the cross-cultural transfer of personalism *per se*.

As the specialist on Franco-German cultural transfers Thomas Keller has put it: ‘in Rougemont there are no throwbacks to the classic texts of personalism [i.e. the German or Russian sources], even though he is affected by a number of German-speaking authors, such

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<sup>419</sup> Rougemont acknowledged that a revolution would always involve some imperfection and brutality: ‘Nous ne sommes pas idéalistes: l’“imperfection naturelle” ne sera jamais supprimée dans l’oeuvre humaine’, Denis de Rougemont, ‘Sur la violence bourgeoise’, *Plans*, nouvelle série, 2 (15 May 1932), 8.

<sup>420</sup> See detailed analysis in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 127-32.

<sup>421</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Journal Métaphysique* (Paris, 1935), 324-9.

<sup>422</sup> Arnaud Dandieu and Alexandre Marc, ‘Misère et grandeur du spirituel’, “Documents du C.I.F.E.”, *L’Europe en formation*, 172-173, Special issue, 4 (July-August 1974). This article was initially designed as the first chapter of a book, but the book was never completed following Dandieu’s premature death. It was first published in Spanish as *Miseria y grandeza de lo espiritual* in Uruguay in 1937, through the agency of Louis Ollivier an ON militant who visited Argentina in 1936.

<sup>423</sup> Roy has established that the anonymous text ‘L’Action – Précisions sur “L’Ordre Nouveau”’, in *Plans*, 10 (Dec. 1931) was drawn up by Marc, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 251-4.

as Otto, Kassner, Herrigel'.<sup>424</sup> German sources came second, both in time and importance, in Rougemont's thinking. If Rudolf Kassner played a part in Rougemont's essay-writing, it was secondary to the influence of *La Nouvelle revue française (NRF)*, Marcel Arland and Julien Benda for instance.<sup>425</sup> Similarly, Rougemont's idea of achieving self-knowledge through sports was derived from Montherlant long before he read Eugen Herrigel.<sup>426</sup> His theory of religious experience, and the influence of Rudolf Otto in particular, will require examination in Chapter 7.<sup>427</sup> In 1932, Rougemont came to develop a particular emphasis on personhood, by way of his contacts with Alexandre Marc.

The two articles that Rougemont wrote for *Plans* developed the ON concept of 'violence spirituelle', distinct from physical brutality.<sup>428</sup> The first article 'Sur la violence bourgeoise' denounced the hidden violence in bourgeois democracy.<sup>429</sup> In Rougemont's words, '*nous vivons en vérité sous un régime de violence, et tous les bourgeois pacifiques qui se prévalent contre nous de leur « humanité » sont en réalité des complices de cette violence jamais avouée.*'<sup>430</sup> Bourgeois violence started at primary school (the conformism imposed on children) and justified war and the establishment of colonies, for purely economic purposes.<sup>431</sup> It took the pretext of high and abstract principles: 'Ainsi la violence bourgeoise

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<sup>424</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 245. (Translation: Christian Roy)

<sup>425</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>426</sup> See introduction and Rougemont, 'M. de Montherlant, le sport et les Jésuites'; Eugen Herrigel was a neo-Kantian of the South-West German School of philosophy (Heidelberg). His *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953) describes a classic attempt to apply the themes of Zen Buddhism to various practical disciplines. The key notion here seems to be that the 'self' in the sense of the ego or 'egoistic self' must be 'let go', left behind in favour of a more profound experience of immersion that no longer separates the 'authentic self' from the experience in which it is involved.

<sup>427</sup> Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), an early and leading student of religious experience, was a devout Christian thinker (part theologian, part philosopher, part phenomenologist of religious experience) who was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. He held that numinous experience – an experience of the uncanny that is strongest and most important in cases in which it seems to its subject to be the experience of God – is unique. Such experience of God, he held, occurred in both Semitic and South Asian theistic traditions.

<sup>428</sup> His analysis of 'violence créatrice' bears comparison with Georg Simmel's analysis of conflict (*Kampf*) as a sane form of sociation. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would speak of the hidden violence and perversions of democracy some forty years later, see his *Fondements d'une théorie de la violence symbolique* (Paris, 1973).

<sup>429</sup> Rougemont, 'Sur la violence bourgeoise', esp. 8.

<sup>430</sup> Rougemont, 'Sur la violence bourgeoise', 7. The emphasis is his.

<sup>431</sup> 'Toute l'astuce de ceux qui gouvernent consiste alors à dissimuler la nécessité purement économique de telles violences, à les attribuer à des facteurs inventés pour les besoins de la cause, et qui paraissent totalement étrangers aux buts de notre civilisation capitaliste, et même hostiles à son progrès normal.', in Rougemont, 'Sur la violence bourgeoise', 7. The emphasis is his.

est caractérisée par son hypocrisie, ou encore par son abstraction. Il importe qu'elle ne s'avoue jamais, qu'elle invoque toujours un prétexte élevé : maintenir l'ordre, porter au loin la civilisation, sauvegarder des « valeurs » que l'on dit être « de culture ».<sup>432</sup> This was a fine critique of imperialism.

Rougemont's second article in *Plans* criticized 'l'état d'esprit faussement révolutionnaire' of the bourgeois Marxists. Enthusiasm for Marxist orthodoxy was a form of conformity, and thus 'les petits purs sont tout simplement les petits bourgeois de la Révolution.'<sup>433</sup> By contrast, the ON group called for 'la violence spirituelle créatrice', which was said to be concretely based on 'la personne' – 'réelle, imparfaite, mais féconde'.<sup>434</sup> A revolution would not go wrong, in Rougemont's view, if only it could perpetually be checked with the concrete, 'cette revendication perpétuelle de l'humain'.<sup>435</sup>

According to Christian Roy, Marc's last article for *Plans*, on 20 April 1932, marked the beginning of the stabilisation of the concept of the person, despite a confusion between the title of the article 'Primauté de la personnalité' and the heading on the cover 'Primauté de la personne humaine'.<sup>436</sup> This confusion shows that 'personnalité' was still a synonym of 'personne' in the spring of 1932. Thereafter, the ON doctrine was established gradually. Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu continued to use 'personne' as synonymous with 'personnalité', 'homme', 'personne humaine' or 'personnalité humaine', as late as October 1933.<sup>437</sup> The lack of a consistent use was problematic – to say the least – for a movement based on the notion of person.

Thinkers of the ON group undertook to remedy this inconsistency, and give doctrinal precision to their movement. As 'personnalisme' became clearer, the ON group separated

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<sup>432</sup> Rougemont, 'Sur la violence bourgeoise', 7.

<sup>433</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Les "petits purs"', *Plans*, nouvelle série, 4 (15 June 1932), 6.

<sup>434</sup> Rougemont, 'Les "petits purs"', 7.

<sup>435</sup> Rougemont, 'Les "petits purs"', 7.

<sup>436</sup> Alexandre Marc, 'Primauté de la personnalité', *Plans*, nouvelle série, 1 (20 April 1932), 6-9. See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 257.

<sup>437</sup> See Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire* (2nd edn. Paris, 1993).

from *Plans*.<sup>438</sup> Lamour complained that ON – presumably in the shape of Alexandre Marc – sought to control all doctrinal texts published in *Plans* in 1931-2. In November 1932, Philippe Lamour admitted to Rougemont having had an argument with Marc.<sup>439</sup> In February 1933, Lamour publicly rejected ‘le spirituel’ and refused any association with personalist groupings.<sup>440</sup> While ON emphasised the ‘spiritual’, Lamour turned towards Marxism. In the early 1930s, ON was not only suspect in the eyes of Marxist revolutionaries, but also in the eyes of the Catholics who formed *Esprit*.

### ***Esprit*'s distrust of the personalist revolution (1931-1933)**

It is only in 1933 that Mounier came to adopt personalism from ON, without acknowledging it, largely, it seems, because mentioning ON would have put *Esprit* in a difficult situation vis-à-vis the Catholic Church. My research into Rougemont's papers leads to the conclusion that Mounier distrusted personalism when he started *Esprit*, and his editorial board was altogether hostile to ON – the only personalist group in France at the time. This section recapitulates the story of the transfer of personalism from ON to *Esprit*, and further clarifies it in the light of Rougemont's papers.

In December 1931, Emmanuel Mounier visited Marc, to ask his advice for the launching of ‘une revue comme *Plans*, mais catholique’, which would eventually become *Esprit*.<sup>441</sup> Since December 1929, when he famously stated, ‘A nous autres pianistes de 25 ans, il manque un piano’, Mounier had been looking for an opportunity to start a new journal.<sup>4</sup> This opportunity arose in 1932, under the patronage of Jacques Maritain. And so *Esprit* was founded by Mounier, together with three friends, Georges Izard, André Déléage and Louis-

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<sup>438</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 349-51, 361.

<sup>439</sup> Philippe Lamour to Rougemont, 5 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

<sup>440</sup> Philippe Lamour, ‘Pour dissiper une équivoque’, *Bulletin des groupes Plans*, 3rd year, 1 (Feb. 1933), 15-16.

<sup>441</sup> Roy, ‘Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personalisme’, 36-7.

<sup>442</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Emmanuel Mounier et sa génération. Lettres, carnets et inédits* (2nd edn. Paris, 2000), 72.

Emile Galey.<sup>443</sup> *Esprit* is the most famous (and the most studied) of the third-way journals of the 1930s. It was a relatively large publication from the beginning. Between 1932 and 1934, *Esprit* rose from 2000 to 3000 copies.

At its launching in October 1932, *Esprit* had neither concrete proposals nor precise plans for the revolution it heralded.<sup>444</sup> The manifesto published in the first issue of *Esprit* lacked a clear policy.<sup>445</sup> The founders of *Esprit* shared Charles Péguy<sup>446</sup> as a tutelary figure with the ‘Jeune Droite’ dissidents of Action Française.<sup>447</sup> It would be wrong to see *Esprit* as a right-wing movement, however. The journal *Esprit* was backed by a rather leftist political movement called ‘Troisième Force’, launched in November 1932 by Georges Izard, Emile Galey and André Déléage.<sup>448</sup>

In March 1933, Rougemont hoped that the Troisième Force would gather ‘tous les éléments révolutionnaires non embrigadés dans les partis, et un nombre croissant de jeunes militants « de gauche » et syndicalistes, écœurés par la bureaucratie politique’.<sup>449</sup> The relations between the political movement and the journal *Esprit* would rapidly deteriorate, however, owing to the discrepancy between the Troisième Force’s push for political

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<sup>443</sup> The role of each protagonist is the subject of historiographical debate. Loubet del Bayle thinks plausible the testimony of Georges Izard, who said he agreed on the project of a journal with Galey and Déléage before Mounier joined them, see Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 134. By contrast, Michel Winock considers that Mounier and Izard played an equal part in the ‘paternity’ of *Esprit*, see Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 47-8.

<sup>444</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 144-5.

<sup>445</sup> See *Manifeste de Font-Romeu*, drafted in August 1932, in the annex of Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 407-13. For example, in the conclusion (p. 413), the regions, the State and a worldwide federation, were defined rather loosely: ‘L’Etat groupe des régions. Il dépasse de beaucoup le cadre de la nation actuelle. Il correspond à une unité géographique et une véritable civilisation spirituelle. Au dessus de ces unités, une fédération mondiale doit avoir pour but de fixer les lignes générales du plan. Elle doit aussi assurer la paix entre les Etats et plus encore organiser un échange des valeurs morales qu’ils représentent.’

<sup>446</sup> Mounier, Izard and Marcel Péguy published a study of Péguy in Maritain’s collection *Le Roseau d’Or*: Emmanuel Mounier, Marcel Péguy, Georges Izard, *La pensée de Charles Péguy* (Paris, 1931). See Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 21-3.

<sup>447</sup> On the ‘Jeune Droite’, see Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*. Véronique Auzépy-Chavagnac emphasises the Catholic branch of ‘Jeune Droite’: Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*.

<sup>448</sup> The Troisième Force would only count a few hundred militants, according to interviews of L.-E. Galey by Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 111.

<sup>449</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Les forces nouvelles en France’, *Demain?*, 12-13 (March-Apr. 1933), 24.



propaganda and Mounier's view of politics as 'impure'.<sup>450</sup> Throughout the 1930s, *Esprit* oscillated between Mounier's desire to remain above political struggles and his conviction that the doctrine of *Esprit* needed to find concrete expression in political action. Mounier went from detestation of revolutionary politics in 1932-4 to calling for a communitarian revolution ('Révolution communautaire') in January 1935, and from backing the Popular Front in 1936 to supporting the National Revolution under the Occupation (1940-1).

Now that *Esprit* has become seen as *the* personalist movement in France, it is paradoxical to think that *Esprit* and Emmanuel Mounier were hostile to personalism in 1932. Mounier mentioned his dislike of Dandieu's personalism in his diary (18 October 1932): 'son *personnalisme*, que tous les autres récitent, est une affirmation fondamentale de la puissance de création de la personne humaine, nietzschéenne en un sens' (unlike many 'non-conformistes des années trente', Mounier did not celebrate Nietzsche as a prophet).<sup>451</sup> As Rougemont remarked later, Mounier's emphasis on '*personnalisme*' shows that it was a new and unclear concept for him at the time when he started *Esprit*.<sup>452</sup>

Christian Roy has demonstrated that Mounier copied part of the ON programme – without acknowledging it – between November 1932 and the winter of 1933.<sup>453</sup> According to Mounier himself, this period would constitute the doctrinal phase in the history of *Esprit*.<sup>4</sup> At the launching of *Esprit*, Alexandre Marc – the founder of ON and the first proponent of personalism in France – occupied an office next to Mounier's at the Desclée De Brouwer publishing house, Rue des Saints-Pères. He was meant to look after the international

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<sup>450</sup> The term is that of a sympathetic historian, Winock, "*Esprit*". *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 110-14. The official split occurred in July 1933. The relationships between Mounier and Izard, the leader of the Troisième Force, remained cordial until November 1934, when the Troisième Force merged with Bergery's Front Commun to form the Front Social. See Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 149-50.

<sup>451</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Mounier et sa génération, Lettres, carnets et inédits* (Collection "Esprit". Paris, 1956), 101.

<sup>452</sup> Rougemont wrote, in his copy of *Mounier et sa génération* (kept in his archives in the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel, 21R E145) : '*personnalisme*: 1<sup>ère</sup> mention du terme par E.M. !'. See also Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 254, 259; Christian Roy and John Hellman, 'Le personnalisme et les contacts entre non-conformistes de France et d'Allemagne autour de l'*Ordre Nouveau* et de *Gegner* 1930-42', in Hans-Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, and Michel Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy: les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années trente* (Paris, 1993), 37.

<sup>453</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 385-6.

<sup>454</sup> Quoted in *Dieu vivant*, 16 (1950), 43.

development of ‘*Esprit, Revue internationale*’.<sup>455</sup> He thought privately that *Esprit* would be the literary journal of ON, which already had a political voice in *Mouvements*.<sup>456</sup> This did not help the long-term relationships between Marc and Mounier.

In the second issue of *Esprit*, in November 1932, Marc justified a revolutionary ‘ordre nouveau’ in Europe, while Rougemont, under the pseudonym of Jean-Pierre Cartier, also called for an ‘ordre nouveau’ and supported Jacques Martin, a conscientious objector judged by the French state (and defended by a Protestant lawyer).<sup>457</sup> The articles of Marc and Rougemont precipitated discord at *Esprit*. Mounier fell under the reproach of Catholic patriots, such as Maritain and Bridoux, who did not believe ‘que l’on peut être à la fois catholique intégralement et sincèrement révolutionnaire’.<sup>458</sup> Thus the tensions between ON and *Esprit* reflected broader disagreements among Catholics over the issue of revolution.

Obviously, the incompatibility between Catholicism and Revolution had a long and sensitive history in France. In many respects, the 1930s were years of revolutionary fervour. *Esprit* did not escape the debate. From the very beginning, the journal was split between conventional Catholics and those who supported non-confessional revolutionary action. Mounier, who welcomed non-Christian contributions to *Esprit*, was torn between the two attitudes. Jacques Maritain and his followers at the publishing house Desclée de Brouwer, (hosting *Esprit*) were adamant to see *Esprit* dissociate itself from the revolutionary influence of ON.<sup>459</sup> Mounier gradually moved away from Alexandre Marc, whilst keeping secret the pressure exercised by Maritain and refusing to follow his plans for a great Catholic journal.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 394.

<sup>456</sup> Interview of Marc by Gilbert Ganne, in ‘Qu’as-tu fait de ta jeunesse?’ – ‘L’Ordre Nouveau’, *Arts*, 562 (4-10 April 1956).

<sup>457</sup> Jean-Pierre Cartier, ‘On oubliera les juges’, *Esprit*, 2 (1 Nov. 1932), 297-301.

<sup>458</sup> See note of 5 Nov. 1932, in Mounier, *Mounier et sa génération, Lettres, carnets et inédits*, 103.

<sup>459</sup> See Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, 60-4, 70, 79. See also Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 397.

<sup>460</sup> This is now a well known episode in the history of *Esprit*, see ‘Editorial, *Esprit*: octobre 1932-octobre 2002’, *Esprit*, 288 (Oct. 2002), 4-5.

In the latter part of his life, Rougemont remembered that there had been four or five crises between *Esprit* and ON before 1934, and each time the clash had been avoided thanks to Alexandre Marc's efforts.<sup>461</sup> This interpretation seems to be confirmed by a letter sent to Rougemont as early as November 1932 in which Alexandre Marc expressed discontent about the second issue of *Esprit*.<sup>462</sup> The tone of Marc's letter confirmed, if need be, the inflexible politics of ON, as well as Marc's desire to control *Esprit*. He asked Rougemont to influence the editorial board of *Esprit*, where Rougemont stood as an ON member: 'De ton côté, tu pourrais, peut-être, agir sur les membres du Cons[eil] de Réd[action] en leur montrant tout ce que leur attitude a d'inadmissible & de maladroit. Que nos articles passent dans Confr[ontations] soit. Mais qu'on les espace ou même les refuse, non !'<sup>463</sup> After this, Rougemont told stories about the united revolutionary front formed by ON and *Esprit*, albeit in 'gestation doctrinale', in the 'Cahier de revendications' of December 1932.<sup>464</sup>

On 1 January 1933, Mounier wrote to Rougemont that while the editorial board of *Esprit* expressed the wish to break with ON, he had supported Rougemont's continued presence at *Esprit*: 'Certains de mes amis, considérant que notre mésentente s'avérait définitive avec l'esprit de L'Ordre Nouveau comme tel, ont soutenu [...] que votre présence dans nos conseils devenait contradictoire avec son motif premier, qui était la représentation de

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<sup>461</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Alexandre Marc et l'invention du personnalisme', *Le Fédéralisme et Alexandre Marc* (Lausanne, 1974), 58.

<sup>462</sup> 'La crise de l'O.N. se complique du fait de la crise de notre collaboration avec E.[*Esprit*] Car je considère que le refus d'insérer l'article A.D.[Arnaud Dandieu] & A.M. [Alexandre Marc] (sur la phil[osophie] de la personne) est un signe extrêmement grave & qui rend toute collaboration difficile & même improbable. R.D. [René Dupuis] a téléphoné à G.I. [Georges Izard] & a demandé à le voir : tu connais assez notre ami R.D. pour savoir qu'il va secouer énergiquement.', Alexandre Marc to Rougemont, 12 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>463</sup> 'Confrontations' was a column featuring articles whose authors were close to *Esprit* without being part of the journal. Alexandre Marc to Rougemont, 12 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>464</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 231 (1 Dec. 1932), 838-41 (quote 840).

ce groupe. Je vous ai défendu.<sup>465</sup> This letter of January 1933 confirms that there was never a ‘common front’ between *Esprit* and ON as groups.<sup>466</sup> From a personal point of view however, Mounier made efforts to resolve misunderstandings with Rougemont.<sup>467</sup> Mounier was shocked by an article in *Hic et Nunc*, in which Rougemont condemned ‘la politique romaine’ for allowing neither ‘foi’ nor ‘vérité’.<sup>468</sup> Thus one may remark that Rougemont may have been a mediator in literary and political matters, but certainly not in ecclesiastical relations. Mounier admitted: ‘Je ne comprends plus dès lors sur quelles bases vous concevez la collaboration avec des catholiques, j’entends bien entendu non pas dans un mouvement d’action mais dans une revue qui est d’abord *Esprit*.’<sup>469</sup> Rougemont was summoned to make his position clear. Besides the personal offence, Mounier must have been urged to write because *Esprit* was under threat of condemnation by the episcopate for mixing Catholicism with social revolution.<sup>470</sup> I would suggest that Rougemont may have seemed less dangerous a revolutionary in the eyes of the French political and ecclesiastic authorities, as he was a foreigner and a Protestant. Rougemont chose to continue to represent ON at *Esprit*, holding that the two movements were complementary.

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<sup>465</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 1 Jan. 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence. The letter was written from Grenoble, where Mounier spent the Christmas holidays. There can be no doubt as to the early date of the letter – January 1933 – since Mounier still uses ‘vous’, whereas he would use ‘tu’ in all the posterior correspondence. For instance, in the summer of 1933, Mounier had become more familiar with Rougemont, and he used ‘tu’ when he asked Rougemont’s help for the ‘conférences de novembre’ in Switzerland. Letter of Mounier to Rougemont, 3 Aug. 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence. On Mounier’s lectures in Switzerland, see below and Francis Python, ‘Maintenir l’ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d’*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30’, in Alain Clavien and Bertrand Mueller (eds), *Le goût de l’histoire, des idées et des hommes. Mélanges offerts au professeur Jean-Pierre Aguet* (Vevey, 1996).

<sup>466</sup> See Chapter 4 and Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, esp. 155-206; Michel Trebitsch, ‘Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le “Cahier de revendications” de décembre 1932’, in Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l’Entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995).

<sup>467</sup> ‘Il s’agit de nous dire les choses clairement, afin de ne pas voiler les fissures et nous accuser plus tard d’hypocrisies antérieures.’, Mounier to Rougemont, 1 Jan. 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>468</sup> In November 1932, Rougemont had written: ‘La politique romaine est la recherche d’une harmonie statique des relations humaines, d’un visible « principe d’union » (terme de l’encyclique *Quadragesimo anno*), tout à fait étranger au réalisme « tragique » de l’Évangile, et qui même, dans certains cas extrêmes, nous tient quitte de la foi. Il ne s’agit jamais pour nous de rendre cette vie possible, mais tout au plus d’abattre les obstacles à la foi, les idoles, les synthèses dans lesquelles l’homme cherche sa sécurité, et qui n’ont pas de vérité.’ Rougemont, ‘Principe d’une politique du pessimisme actif’, 29.

<sup>469</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 1 Jan. 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>470</sup> Alexandre Marc, ‘Bref historique de mes rapports avec Jacques Maritain’, *L’Europe en formation*, 302 (Autumn 1996), 25-34.

The aims of *Esprit* in the 1930s may be summarized in four points: firstly, to distinguish the ‘primauté du spirituel’ from ‘spiritualisme’ (understood as cheap religiosity); secondly, to set apart the spiritual revolution from the ‘désordre établi’ (see below); thirdly, to dissociate the revolution from materialism (that was largely aimed at Soviet communism); and lastly, to defeat capitalism, liberalism, fascism, and nationalism.<sup>471</sup> All of these aims were vital to Rougemont and central to ON. This convergence is not a coincidence, since *Esprit* drew the essential idea of a personalist revolution from ON, after March 1933.

The issue of *Esprit* on the ‘Rupture entre l’ordre chrétien et le désordre établi’ in March 1933 was a defining moment for Mounier’s adoption of personalism. This special issue has been analysed by Michel Winock, with regard to *Esprit*’s approach to the spiritual, and by Bruno Ackermann, with special reference to Rougemont.<sup>472</sup> Ackermann’s analysis of Rougemont’s contribution is excellent and there is no need to repeat it here, save for two additional points: Rougemont’s role in the choice of the title, and Marc’s influence in the transmission of personalism from ON to *Esprit*.

The title of the issue, initially planned as ‘Rupture du Christianisme et du Monde bourgeois’, was changed to ‘Rupture entre l’ordre chrétien et le désordre établi’ at the last minute.<sup>473</sup> To John Hellman, Mounier borrowed the play on words ‘le désordre établi’ (referring to the status quo) from an article by Marc, published in *Esprit* in February 1933, and thereafter “‘Le désordre établi’” was employed in the subsequent issue of *Esprit* and became a cliché at the journal to describe what *Esprit* stood against. At this writing the term is used now and then in *Le Monde* and, like personalism, attributed to Mounier, never to Marc.<sup>474</sup> Yet if ‘le désordre établi’ has one author, it should be Rougemont, who first used the expression in his *Méfaits de l’Instruction Publique* (1929).<sup>475</sup> However, it may be noted that

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<sup>471</sup> See ‘Lignes de position 1932-1939’ in Winock, *“Esprit”. Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 71-106.

<sup>472</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 321-6; Winock, *“Esprit”. Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 73-5.

<sup>473</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 321.

<sup>474</sup> Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, 81n.59.

<sup>475</sup> ‘[...] l’Ecole radicale ne peut pas être idéaliste: car elle deviendrait un danger pour le désordre établi.’ in Rougemont, ‘Les méfaits de l’instruction publique’, 147.

the phrase ‘geordnete Unordnung’ was also found in some German ‘third-way discourses’ in the mid-1920s.<sup>476</sup>

In a sense, the special issue ‘Rupture entre l’ordre chrétien et le désordre établi’ marked the climax of the cooperation between *Esprit* and the Christian members of ON. Christian Roy has analysed the role of this issue in the transfer of personalism from ON to *Esprit*, from Marc to Mounier.<sup>477</sup> The transfer was based on an amusing subterfuge, given Mounier’s distrust of the Nietzschean character of ON. Alexandre Marc played a trick on Mounier by inventing a German theologian, Otto Neumann, as a pretext to present his own religious and political convictions. Under the guise of a review article on Otto Neumann, Marc stated the possibility for a revolutionary *and* Catholic political position, combining two options that were hitherto antagonistic in French political culture. He claimed: ‘Otto Neumann établit l’identité profonde du christianisme et de l’esprit révolutionnaire’ through a novel doctrine, ‘ce personalisme (qu’il appelle, lui, humanisme catholique ou même catholicité tout court)’.<sup>478</sup> For the first time in France, personalism – initially perceived as Nietzschean – was presented as a form of Catholic humanism, which aimed at restoring the revolutionary force of the Revelation.

Pretending to quote Otto Neumann – whose O.N. initials should have been revealing – Marc wrote: “Le christianisme seul a fait de l’individu une personne : c’est pourquoi l’individu est libéral et la personne catholique. En d’autres termes, c’est pourquoi l’individu est réactionnaire et la personne révolutionnaire.” L’individu est d’ailleurs une abstraction, tandis que la personne est la réalité.<sup>479</sup> In a complete reversal of conventional categories in France, ‘Neumann montre [...] que sans le christianisme, l’esprit révolutionnaire n’existerait pas.’ Christianity was the wellspring of revolutions, and the movements normally considered

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<sup>476</sup> Thomas Keller quotes a 1922 text by Paul Ludwig Landsberg (a great influence at *Esprit* as an émigré intellectual after 1933), which seems to refer for the first time to ‘geordnete Unordnung’ as well as to a ‘konservative Revolution’. See Thomas Keller, ‘Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier’, in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L’actualité d’un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l’UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 129.

<sup>477</sup> On the identity of Otto Neumann and on his influence on Mounier, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 398-403.

<sup>478</sup> Alexandre Marc, ‘Le christianisme et la Révolution spirituelle’, *Esprit*, 6 (March 1933), 934-72.

<sup>479</sup> Marc, ‘Le christianisme et la Révolution spirituelle’.

revolutionary were the contrary of what they seemed: Marxism was an extreme form of materialism: 'l'idéal marxiste n'est [...] que l'expression suprême et la plus conséquente du capitalisme', and fascism was condemned as impotent, as a mere 'réformisme lyrique'.<sup>4</sup> Both Marxism and Fascism were fake revolutions, compared with Christianity.

Thereafter, Mounier became so enthusiastic about Otto Neumann that Marc no longer dared to reveal his identity.<sup>481</sup> Mounier developed the opposition individual vs. person following O.N. (Otto Neumann / Ordre Nouveau), and *Esprit* came to contrast the individual (self-centred, consumerist and reactionary) with the person (spiritual, humane, and revolutionary because Christian). This discourse, characteristic of *Esprit* from 1934 onwards, was a version of the personalism of ON in the guise of a Catholic revolution.

## **2. *Esprit and communitarian personalism***

In 1934, when Emmanuel Mounier decided to abandon the 'neither right nor left' line of ON, it was said that *Esprit* and ON had become irremediably divided. It was a gradual process, completed in 1934.<sup>482</sup> However, the seriousness of the rupture between the personalist movements has been overestimated. The continued participation of Rougemont to *Esprit* calls for more nuance in the interpretation of the break between *Esprit* and ON in 1934. The break was largely the result of the political situation in Europe and in France, and it was not definitive.

### ***Esprit* turns towards the left in 1934**

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<sup>480</sup> Marc, 'Le christianisme et la Révolution spirituelle'.

<sup>481</sup> When the misunderstanding became too embarrassing – Mounier was intent on publishing Otto Neumann's works in France – Marc had to pretend that his fictitious double had died in a car accident. For more details, see Roy's analysis, based on his interviews with Marc and the correspondence between Marc and Mounier, Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 401-403.

<sup>482</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 395-422.

Following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, the international situation made the ON plans for a common front with German youth virtually impossible. Nevertheless, in *Jeune Europe* (1933), René Dupuis and Alexandre Marc continued their propaganda for a European common front: 'dans toute l'Europe, au cours de ces quinze années, la jeunesse a rompu avec "l'idéal" démocratique parlementaire et libéral – soit qu'elle a déjà fait la révolution et fondé un nouveau régime, soit qu'elle se désolidarise entièrement du régime existant et se proclame ouvertement "révolutionnaire"'.<sup>483</sup> Marc and Dupuis condemned National Socialism as a racist form of nationalism. They found all German revolutionary movements guilty of nationalism and statolatry, except for the group *Gegner*, an anti-capitalist movement both socialist and national, with which they hoped to cooperate.<sup>4</sup> ON continued to believe in the need for a European common front, even if in practice it came to be increasingly centred on the hexagon for lack of interlocutors abroad. In France however, the bipolarisation of political life made the 'neither right nor left' line increasingly difficult to maintain.

In 1934, the French political scene was heated by the Stavisky scandal and the rising influence of the extreme-right. In this context, the riots of February 1934 precipitated an extreme polarization of political forces.<sup>485</sup> French intellectuals faced the alternative of partaking in partisan action or becoming inaudible.<sup>486</sup> ON refused to choose sides, while *Esprit* shifted towards the left. A letter of Mounier to Berdiaev, written in the aftermath of the events of February 1934, marked the opening of yet another conflict between ON and *Esprit*. Mounier wrote to Berdiaev: 'Je vous expliquerai moi-même, ou Maritain si vous le voyez avant, ce conflit avec L'Ordre Nouveau. [...] Le mouvement s'oriente nettement vers un fascisme anti-ouvrier et une technocratie petite-bourgeoise que nous ne pouvons admettre.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Alexandre Marc and René Dupuis, *Jeune Europe* (Paris, 1933), XII.

<sup>484</sup> Marc and Dupuis, *Jeune Europe*, 95-125. On *Gegner* and its contacts with *La Critique Sociale* (Boris Souvarine), *Plans*, ON and *Esprit*, see Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 480-2.

<sup>485</sup> See, among an abundant literature, the classic work by Serge Berstein, *Le 6 février 1934* (Paris, 1975). Revised by Michel Dobry in the article 'Février 1934 et la découverte de l'allergie de la société française à la "Révolution fasciste"', *Revue française de sociologie*, XXX, 3-4, July-December 1989, 511-33; republished in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 129-50.

<sup>486</sup> Trebitsch, 'Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le "Cahier de revendications" de décembre 1932', 221-2.

<sup>487</sup> See letter of 15 February 1934, misdated in 1936, Emmanuel Mounier, *Oeuvres* (vol. IV, Paris, 1956), 580.



John Hellman remarked that this letter of 15 February 1934 had been strangely misdated in '1936', in the 1956 edition of Mounier's complete works.<sup>488</sup> The dating 'error' helped to persuade a generation of historians that Mounier's public quarrel with the ON group in early 1934 constituted a definitive rupture between the two personalist movements.

In the April 1934 issue of *Esprit*, Mounier publicized the 'divergences essentielles' between *Esprit* and ON.<sup>489</sup> He accused ON of a 'nietzschéisme trop souvent scolaire et un aristocratismes diffus'.<sup>490</sup> Mounier incriminated the controversial *Lettre à Hitler* (published in *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 5, November 1933)<sup>491</sup> as well as a 'mépris latent' for manual work at ON.<sup>492</sup> Thereafter, Jean-Marie Domenach, in his biography of Mounier, explained that 'en avril 1934, *Esprit* rompt avec *L'Ordre Nouveau*', and departed from the ambiguous 'Troisième voie de *L'Ordre nouveau*' definitively.<sup>493</sup> Let us see how the second proposition has been revised.

John Hellman has questioned the definitive character of the rupture between *Esprit* and ON, whilst emphasising the ambiguous character of the personalist third way.<sup>494</sup> In 1981, Hellman asserted that the dispute of 1934 'lasted only a few months and, according to Denis de Rougemont, was probably conducted largely for the benefit of Berdyaev and Jacques Maritain.'<sup>495</sup> I agree with Hellman that the dispute was temporary, but his reference to Rougemont makes excessive claims. While Rougemont suggested that Maritain played a role

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<sup>488</sup> See Emmanuel Mounier, *Oeuvres* (vol. IV, Paris, 1956), 580 and Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, 286 n.39.

<sup>489</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, 'Réponse à l'Ordre Nouveau', *Esprit*, 19 (1 Apr. 1934), 201.

<sup>490</sup> Mounier, 'Réponse à l'Ordre Nouveau', 201-2.

<sup>491</sup> The *Lettre à Hitler* will be considered in Chapter 6.

<sup>492</sup> On the different conceptions of work at *Esprit* and at *L'Ordre Nouveau*, see below and Chapter 5.

<sup>493</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, *Emmanuel Mounier* ("Ecrivains de toujours". Paris, 1972), 63.

<sup>494</sup> See in particular his latest work Hellman, *The communitarian third way*. Chapter 6 will try to show the limits of Hellman's approach.

<sup>495</sup> Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, 286 n.39. In the early 1980s, when Rougemont read Hellman's account of the pressure exerted by Maritain, he wrote in the margin: 'J'ai tout ignoré à l'époque!' B.P.U.N., Fonds DR, 'Le personnalisme – *Esprit*, Personnalisme, documents divers', photocopies of Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*.

in the conflict between Mounier and the ON group, he did not go further into conjectures.<sup>4</sup> In view of the scarcity of sources, there can be no definitive answer as to the causes and the beneficiaries of the break. It is possible to say however, considering the tensions that existed between *Esprit* and ON from the very beginning, that the *Lettre à Hitler* was but a pretext for the break.<sup>497</sup>

Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, Christian Roy and Thomas Keller have emphasised the importance of 1934 as a rupture, whilst defending the ON third way as a genuine attempt to rethink politics (and not an ambivalent or proto-fascist ideology).<sup>498</sup> Roy and Keller have convincingly argued that Mounier used the *Lettre à Hitler* as a pretext to depart from the ON's 'neither right nor left' line.<sup>499</sup> In the following months, *Esprit* underwent a phase in which the journal established its position vis-à-vis revolutionary action independently from ON.<sup>500</sup> For instance, a Marxism study group was created.<sup>501</sup> For them, the rupture between ON and *Esprit* in 1934 was momentous, and ON was the only movement to keep the genuine personalist third way.

In what follows, I argue that *Esprit* did depart from the 'neither right nor left' line, but since it developed personalism, it actually became closer to ON with regard to doctrine. In the aftermath of the events of February 1934, Mounier markedly turned towards the left. After condemning ON in his article of April 1934, Mounier reckoned that 'aujourd'hui à gauche, il y a le peuple [...] ; à gauche il y a [...] le grand courant des réformes sociales'.<sup>502</sup> But Rougemont's papers show evidence that the rupture between ON and *Esprit* in 1934 was largely cosmetic. There was significantly more unity than has yet been discerned.

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<sup>496</sup> Rougemont, 'Alexandre Marc et l'invention du personalisme', 57.

<sup>497</sup> This interpretation had already been suggested by Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 153-4.

<sup>498</sup> On this, see Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>499</sup> Keller, 'Le personalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 517-19; Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 407-9. See also my Chapter 6.

<sup>500</sup> Keller is particularly good on this point: Keller, 'Le personalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 542-3.

<sup>501</sup> See Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, 102.

<sup>502</sup> Mounier, 'Réponse à l'Ordre Nouveau', 202.

## Rougemont continues representing the ON at *Esprit* after 1934

It is highly significant that Rougemont continued representing ON at *Esprit* throughout the 1930s. In contradiction with his claims of rupture with ON, Mounier continued asking for Rougemont's contribution to *Esprit*, until his death in 1950.<sup>503</sup> This requires the revision of the theory of a sudden and sharp 'rupture' between *Esprit* and ON in 1934.

Rougemont was the only writer to contribute equally to *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau* throughout the 1930s. Admittedly, the painter Jean Labasque was also writing for both ON and *Esprit* on issues such as the art trade.<sup>504</sup> It is interesting to note that Rougemont and Labasque seemed primarily interested in art – literature and painting respectively – rather than in political or economic doctrine. Yet whereas Labasque's contribution was episodic, Rougemont ranked among the ten main contributors to *Esprit* in the 1930s. Rougemont wrote 31 articles, notes or reviews for *Esprit* until the condemnation of the journal by Vichy in 1941, which makes him the 7<sup>th</sup> main contributor to the journals in terms of the number of articles published.<sup>505</sup> A similar count places Rougemont in 4<sup>th</sup> position in *L'Ordre Nouveau*, with 29 articles under his name, between 1933 and 1938.<sup>506</sup> Thus Rougemont published approximately the same number of articles at *L'Ordre Nouveau* and at *Esprit* in the 1930s.

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<sup>503</sup> After the war, Mounier continued to have ties with Rougemont, sending him all his books with a friendly note [dédicace] each time, cf. in Rougemont's library, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel: Emmanuel Mounier, *Introduction aux existentialismes* (Paris, 1947); Emmanuel Mounier, *L'Éveil de l'Afrique noire* (Collection *Esprit* "Frontière ouverte". Paris, 1948); Emmanuel Mounier, *Liberté sous conditions* (Collection *Esprit*". Paris, 1946); Emmanuel Mounier, *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme?* (Collection *Esprit*". Paris, 1947). See also the correspondence, in which Mounier insisted on having Rougemont's contributions in the postwar *Esprit*: Mounier to Rougemont, 17 Oct. 1945, 15 Aug. 1946, 4 Sept. 1946, 3 July 1947, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence. Rougemont wrote a critical note in *Esprit* (Sept. 1946), which he regretted already before it was published (note and regrets mentioned in Mounier to Rougemont, 15 Aug. 1946 and 4 Sept. 1946). Besides this note, Rougemont's only post-war article for *Esprit* called for a cooperation between Europe and America towards increasing political freedom. Denis de Rougemont, 'Epilogue', *Esprit*, 127 (Nov. 1946). Mounier had insisted that Rougemont send *Esprit* an extract from his next book published by Plon (Mounier to Rougemont, 4 Sept. 1946). See Denis de Rougemont, *Vivre en Amérique* (Paris, 1947), 168-80. Following the death of Mounier, *Esprit* was split between philosovietism and a moderate branch of personalism, supporting reform and democracy. Rougemont's staunch anti-communism and support of the USA was at odds with the radical branch of *Esprit*, and this explains much of the hostility between Rougemont and the *Esprit* of the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>504</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 404.

<sup>505</sup> See the Annex: 'Principaux collaborateurs d'*Esprit*, 1932-1950', in Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*.

<sup>506</sup> After Alexandre Marc (I include his articles under the pseudonym of Michel Glady and some articles signed O.N. which have been identified as his), René Dupuis, and Robert Aron.

This quantitative approach should not hide Rougemont's preference for the personalism of ON. Rougemont contributed to *Esprit* as an ON activist, contrary to what his later self-presentation as being 'above the fray' allows for.<sup>507</sup> Ackermann claims that 'Rougemont, sur le plan des idées, n'appartint que marginalement à l'équipe d'Esprit'.<sup>508</sup> This may be argued, but I disagree when he implies a similar attitude vis-à-vis ON. In 1934, Rougemont explained that he preferred ON to *Esprit* because the ON doctrine was more precise and did not have *Esprit*'s Catholic tone.<sup>509</sup> In 1935, in the first *Bulletin de liaison des groupes "Ordre Nouveau"*, Rougemont contrasted the ON's efforts towards doctrinal rigour with *Esprit*'s 'sentimentalité'.<sup>510</sup> He was wary of *Esprit*'s haziness when it came to revolutionary positions, following the ON principle whereby a revolution is bloody when ill-prepared: 'Ce qui pourrait être plus grave au point de vue de la Révolution, c'est la fluidité excessive du style des manifestes d'*Esprit*. Crainte de l'Index ou incertitudes doctrinales ?' He summoned *Esprit* to follow ON.<sup>511</sup>

The tensions between the two Parisian personalist groups reached their maximum between the winter of 1933-4 and the summer of 1936. This is the exact period when Rougemont was away from Paris. This coincidence points to Rougemont's importance as a mediator between personalists. To support this argument further, it is worth looking into the nature of Rougemont's contributions at *Esprit*. They show how Rougemont took important responsibilities at *Esprit* after 1934, as a member of the ON and a young Barthian. Thereafter, Rougemont asserted that 'la liberté, c'est le droit d'appartenir à plus d'un club'.<sup>512</sup> To study Rougemont makes it clear that the various third-way movements of the 1930s were not mutually exclusive.

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<sup>507</sup> See Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 98. And following Rougemont's presentation, Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 317-20.

<sup>508</sup> Quote from Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 361.

<sup>509</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Où sont les jeunes protestants?' *Le Christianisme social*, 6 (July-Aug. 1934), 55-8.

<sup>510</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Les autres et nous. I. Esprit', *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 1 (15 April 1935), 3-4.

Rougemont, 'Les autres et nous. I. Esprit', 4.

<sup>511</sup> Rougemont, 'Les autres et nous. I. Esprit', 4.

<sup>512</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 98.

In *Esprit*, Rougemont called for a break *hic et nunc* with the establishment, whether bourgeois or religious.<sup>513</sup> Alternatively, he tried to establish a new platform of literary critique;<sup>514</sup> and translated or reviewed German authors.<sup>515</sup> Two of his articles ('Préface à une littérature'<sup>516</sup> and 'L'*Esprit* n'a pas son palais'<sup>517</sup>) discussed the place of literature and culture in general in society. Rougemont played a key role in editing two issues of *Esprit* (on literature and on Switzerland), and he made significant contributions as the editor of the literary rubric in 1936-7.<sup>518</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 5, *L'Ordre Nouveau* remained almost exclusively concerned with 'serious' philosophical, economic, and political doctrine.

In 1934, Rougemont published two essential texts for personalism in France: his collection of essays *Politique de la personne* at the Editions Je Sers, and his 'Définition de la personne' in *Esprit*. Each of these texts was fundamental to both *Esprit* and ON. The two movements stood united with reference to the essential personalist thesis, put forth by Rougemont in *Politique de la personne*: 'Il n'y a pas d'autre cause à la crise présente : l'homme moderne a perdu la mesure de l'humain.'<sup>519</sup> *Politique de la personne* has been seen as *the* key reference on French personalism, understood as an attitude and a philosophy.<sup>520</sup> It was certainly an essential personalist publication in the 1930s, as well as being one of the first pleas for anti-Stalinist and anti-fascist *engagement* in literature.

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<sup>513</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Comment rompre?' *Esprit*, 6 (March 1933).

<sup>514</sup> E.g. Denis de Rougemont, 'Préface à une littérature', *Esprit*, 25 (Oct. 1934). Bruno Ackermann, in his bibliography, provides a list of the book reviews published by Rougemont, see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 2, 1166-82.

<sup>515</sup> E.g. Denis de Rougemont, 'Kasimir Edschmid: Destin allemand', *Esprit*, 32 (May 1935).

<sup>516</sup> Rougemont, 'Préface à une littérature'.

<sup>517</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'L'esprit n'a pas son palais', *Esprit*, 37 (Oct. 1935).

<sup>518</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Brève introduction à quelques témoignages littéraires', *Esprit*, 60 (Sept. 1937).

<sup>519</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Politique de la personne* (2nd edn. Paris, 1946), 20. The emphasis is his.

<sup>520</sup> As P. Izard put it, 'L'ouvrage primordial [du personnalisme, défini comme attitude et philosophie] demeure *Politique de la personne*, paru en 1934, réunissant des articles et conférences de Denis de Rougemont, intéressant cette philosophie et tentant d'en préciser les fondements.' Pierre Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau"' (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont) (Thèse pour le doctorat de 3e cycle, Université de Lille III, 1986), 18.

The first line reads: ‘J’ai, pour la politique, une espèce d’aversion naturelle.’<sup>521</sup> Rougemont continued asserting that, in his day, ‘l’intellectuel’ was forced to deal with politics because otherwise – when thinkers remained aloof from action – there was no impediment to ‘la conception brutale d’une politique stalinienne ou fasciste’.<sup>522</sup> Rougemont believed in the power of ideas. He gave the intellectual a primordial role in society, and there is a sense in which his personalism can only be understood as the project of an *intellectuel engagé* (a term which he was among the first to use, with Paul Nizan).

Rougemont set out the following priorities: ‘La première tâche des intellectuels est, aujourd’hui, de conduire une critique des *mythes collectivistes* nés de la maladie de la personne. Puis il s’agit de retrouver une définition concrète de la personne. Enfin de la traduire en institutions et coutumes. Ou, tout au moins, d’indiquer les limites, la formule et *les buts* de ces institutions.’<sup>523</sup> The articles in *Politique de la personne*, tackled the first and last objectives. Rougemont started by attacking all the alleged collectivist myths: determinism, be it racist or communist,<sup>524</sup> Marxism,<sup>525</sup> political parties,<sup>526</sup> and fascism, understood in a generic sense;<sup>527</sup> he finished with guidelines for a personalist revolution.<sup>528</sup> The second objective – to recover a concrete definition of the person – was not addressed in a formal manner in *Politique de la personne*.<sup>529</sup> Rougemont dealt with it in *Esprit*.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Introduction of 1934, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 15.

<sup>522</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 17.

<sup>523</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 23. The emphasis is his.

<sup>524</sup> ‘Destin du siècle ou vocation personnelle’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 35-52.

<sup>525</sup> See the following chapters: ‘Précédence ou primauté de l’économique dans le marxisme’, ‘Humanisme et christianisme’, ‘Antimarxiste parce que chrétien’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 63-75, 111-117, 119-28.

<sup>526</sup> ‘Ni ange ni bête: ni gauche ni droite’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 79-83.

<sup>527</sup> ‘Fascisme’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 129-139.

<sup>528</sup> See ‘Problèmes de la révolution personaliste’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 140-90.

<sup>529</sup> Rougemont distinguished the person from the individual in the course of a discussion with a Protestant audience, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 53-61.

<sup>530</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, *Esprit*, 27 (1 Dec. 1934), 368-82.

As the first definition of the person at *Esprit* – written, significantly, by an ON personalist – ‘Définition de la personne’ deserves examination both in its conception stage, and final publication. The correspondence leading up to publication is particularly instructive: on the one hand, it emphasises the significance of the question of the person for the Christian philosophers of existence at the time; on the other hand, it stresses the divergences between Mounier and Rougemont. In October 1934, Mounier wrote to Rougemont (who was living in Anduze in the Gard) about his draft ‘Définition de la personne’, to be published in December.<sup>531</sup> Three points were made clear.

Firstly, the rupture of the spring 1934 was not as radical as *Esprit* later claimed, since Mounier admitted that the ON and *Esprit* were pursuing a common research concerning the person. He wrote to Rougemont: ‘Ton papier a été discuté avant-hier soir devant un aréopage qui comprenait Gabriel Marcel, [Nikolai] Berdiaeff, le remplaçant de Scheller [sic. – Mounier was referring to a former student of Max Scheler, Paul-Ludwig Landsberg], etc... Je crois en effet qu’il rapproche beaucoup des nôtres les positions qui peuvent par certains points t’être communes avec *L’Ordre Nouveau*.’<sup>532</sup> The phrasing is awkward, as it suggests that Rougemont would have expressed reservations vis-à-vis the ON. Even so, Mounier continued: ‘Le papier d’ailleurs a été fort apprécié de tout le monde, et il sera sûrement publié en décembre.’<sup>533</sup> Thus, the Christian philosophers of existence, Marcel, Berdiaev, Landsberg, and Mounier, in the Paris of 1934, agreed to the significance of Rougemont’s reflection upon the human person.<sup>534</sup> Rougemont submitted a ‘Définition de la personne’ that sought to avoid the two pitfalls of oversimplification and overrationalisation.

Secondly, the discussion emphasised the specificity of the ON understanding of the person, based upon the concept of act. The main critique of Berdiaev, Marcel, Landsberg and

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<sup>531</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 368-82.

<sup>532</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>533</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>534</sup> Berdiaev’s philosophy of existence and of the person is the least known of all, although it was touched upon in Clément, *Berdiaev, un philosophe russe en France*. Gabriel Marcel was also a philosopher of existence, although he would prove critical as to the ‘ism’ of personalism and existentialism, objecting – with reason – that a philosophy of the person or of existence cannot ‘devenir un *isme* sans se trahir’, in Marcel), 197-8, 229-31. Marcel criticised Rougemont in Gabriel Marcel, ‘“Penser avec les mains” par M. Denis de Rougemont’, *L’Europe nouvelle*, 995 (1937), 236-7.

Mounier lay in ‘les obscurités qui subsistent sur la notion d’acte.’<sup>535</sup> This notion of act resulted from Arnaud Dandieu’s attempt to justify the dignity of the human person by reference to the transcendent and without calling upon religion.<sup>536</sup> Rougemont, drawing alternatively upon Dandieu and upon his Protestant faith, defined the person both as ‘act’ and as ‘vocation’. It was absurd to Mounier: ‘« L’acte est vocation » n’aurait aucun sens, ce qui semble bien marquer un glissement dans le sens que tu donnes au mot « est ».’<sup>537</sup> Rougemont disagreed with Mounier:

Je crois au contraire que *ni l’acte seul*, gratuit et dénué d’intention, et donc d’ordre, n’a de sens ; *ni la vocation seule*, abstraite et non actualisée. Et je ne vois aucune difficulté à établir, dans le cercle de mes « implications », une égalité *de principe* entre l’acte et la vocation. Car je ne considère l’acte que dans sa direction, et la vocation que dans la réception. Ce sens du mot « est », dans mes implications, c’est « existe que par et dans », « exister » étant entendu au sens de Kierk[egaard].<sup>538</sup>

Thus did Rougemont present personalism as a philosophy of existence, following Kierkegaard.<sup>539</sup> He refuted Mounier’s fear that Dandieu’s definition of the person as ‘acte’ risked denying the transcendence of these acts, and turning the person into a ‘personnalité fulgurante, toute entière réalisée dans un instant’.<sup>540</sup> Rougemont maintained his equivalence between person, act, and vocation. This was, for him, a guarantee of transcendence *sensu stricto*. In his own words, ‘Personne = acte, signifie que je ne deviens personne que lorsque je manifeste la vocation que Dieu m’adresse. Ce qui est transcendant à cette manifestation, c’est l’ordre reçu, la Parole de Dieu, – Dieu lui-même.’<sup>541</sup> This position sought to combine the ‘acte’ according to Dandieu with a Calvinist emphasis on vocation.

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<sup>535</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>536</sup> Chapter 5 shows how Dandieu claimed that the act and creation established the dignity of the human person, without having to refer to God.

<sup>537</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>538</sup> Rougemont, Manuscript: ‘Réponses aux objections de Mounier’ [Oct.-Nov ? 1934], Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘Politique de la personne’.

<sup>539</sup> In *Penser avec les mains*, two years later, he would write: ‘Retour à la personne, tel est le sens de la philosophie « existentielle » sous toutes ses formes, et des mouvements théologiques et politiques qui préfigurent dès maintenant *L’Ordre Nouveau*, communautaire, que nous appelons.’ Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 234.

<sup>540</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>541</sup> Rougemont, Manuscript: ‘Réponses aux objections de Mounier’ [Oct.-Nov ? 1934], Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘Politique de la personne’. The emphasis is his.



Thirdly, and finally, Mounier criticized Rougemont because ‘l’idée de communauté a beaucoup moins de présence et de puissance dans ton exposé que la personne. J’ai peur que cet ébranlement de proche en proche manque par suite de souffle métaphysique et de réalité.’<sup>542</sup> He was right to point out that, in Rougemont’s personalism, the community came after the person. Otherwise, community rights could threaten individual freedom. By contrast, *Esprit* valued equally the community and the person. In order to understand the importance and particularity of Rougemont’s definition of the person at *Esprit*, the communitarian emphasis of *Esprit* must now be examined.

### ***Esprit* develops a communitarian personalism from 1934 onwards**

As Mounier announced his break with ON in February 1934, he also planned to work on a ‘philosophie Personnaliste-communautaire’ with Paul-Ludwig Landsberg.<sup>543</sup> A former student of the German personalist Max Scheler, Landsberg had fled the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. Thomas Keller has shown how, in the second half of the 1930s, Landsberg became the most innovative philosopher of *Esprit*, drawing on German personalist philosophers and on Spanish mystics for a weighty philosophy of *engagement*.<sup>544</sup> Roy and Keller are the only two scholars to have studied the beginning of *Esprit*’s communitarian personalism with historical accuracy.<sup>545</sup> Since they were adamant to establish that *Esprit* took personalism from ON without acknowledging it, they overlooked the continued cooperation, albeit limited, between *Esprit* and the ON. It is all the more important for me to establish a

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<sup>542</sup> Mounier to Rougemont, 12 Oct. 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>543</sup> In his letter to Berdiaev announcing the rupture with the ON, quoted above, Mounier wrote: ‘Je vais organiser des groupes d’études, notamment, avec un élève de Sheler [*sic*], exilé à Paris, un groupe pour définir la philosophie Personnaliste-communautaire de notre mouvement.’, in Emmanuel Mounier, *Oeuvres* (vol. IV, Paris, 1956), 580.

<sup>544</sup> On the role of Landsberg at *Esprit*, in transferring German personalist concepts especially, see Keller, ‘Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier’; Thomas Keller, ‘Médiateurs personnalistes entre générations non-conformistes en Allemagne et en France: Alexandre Marc et Paul L. Landsberg’, in Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: Les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l’entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995); Keller, ‘Le personnalisme de l’entre-deux-guerres’, 447-9. See also my final Chapter.

<sup>545</sup> See in particular the research on the theme ‘Personne et communauté’ launched by *Esprit* in the Spring of 1934, which was reported in the *Journal intérieur des Amis d’Esprit* in July 1934, analysed in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 418-19. And the section ‘Comment le personnalisme devint communautaire’, in Roy, ‘Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personnalisme’, 36-42.

balanced account of the relations between the two personalist groups as it was Denis de Rougemont who embodied the continued cooperation between *Esprit* and ON.

Rougemont's 'Définition de la personne' represented both *Esprit* and the ON: it fitted into the development of personalism at *Esprit*, made public in December 1934; at the same time, following ON, Rougemont warned *Esprit* against the risks of drifting into collectivism in the name of community. This double purpose makes 'Définition de la personne' the key text to understand the pluralisation of personalism(s) in 1934.

To introduce his 'Définition de la personne' in *Esprit* (December 1934), Rougemont indicated that he was an editor of *L'Ordre Nouveau* and of *Hic et Nunc*.<sup>546</sup> This set him as a personalist young Barthian. He hoped his definition of the person would be a contribution to 'le bien commun de sa génération.'<sup>547</sup> Analysis of the article shows that he had not conceded a single point to Mounier, Landsberg, Berdiaev, and Marcel – and his self-confidence in front of eminent philosophers is an interesting feature for the biographer.

Rougemont played on the etymology of *persona* – as the mask worn by actors in ancient drama – to bring in the image of a theatre, representing life, in which walk-ons and actors had to play, or rather to invent, their own drama. Rougemont suggested that one could only identify the faces of the actors, the true *dramatis personae*, who really acted (but this brings us back to the ambivalence of the notion of person as a mask: in Ancient drama one could not see the actual faces). That the act expressed the person 'et nous sculpte un visage lisible' was the leitmotiv of Russian personalism (because 'person' and 'face' are the same word in Russian: '*litso*').

Pursuing the theatrical image, Rougemont emphasised two types of performers: 'de l'individu à la personne, la différence est celle du figurant anonyme à l'acteur, de celui qui fait nombre à celui qui fait loi, de celui qui regarde à celui qui s'engage.'<sup>548</sup> It was up to each

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<sup>546</sup> Rougemont, 'Définition de la personne', 368.

<sup>547</sup> Rougemont, 'Définition de la personne', 368.

<sup>548</sup> Rougemont, 'Définition de la personne', 372.

performer to decide whether he wanted to act or not. The person was essentially in communication, provoking or responding to others, unlike the walk-on character who carried on ignoring his neighbours.

In much of modern political thought, Rougemont argued, ‘l’individu n’est conçu qu’à partir de l’ensemble du corps social, comme un élément numérique, indifférencié, objectif. On l’obtient par un processus d’isolation.’<sup>549</sup> Personalism put this political theory upside down. One had to start not from the social body, but from the real persons: ‘la personne est par excellence le terme *premier*, dont dépend toute réalité collective.’<sup>550</sup> Rougemont continued with an ‘anti-utilitarian’ statement: ‘le bien de tous n’est ni concevable ni réalisable aux dépens du bien de chacun’.<sup>551</sup> First and foremost there was each concrete person, the ‘fondement nécessaire et suffisant de toute communauté’.<sup>552</sup> Rougemont questioned the point of any further achievements – whether ‘l’honneur d’un pays’, ‘l’ordre de l’état’, or even ‘l’humanité’ – if they crushed concrete persons.<sup>553</sup>

In December 1934, *Esprit* published Rougemont’s ‘Définition de la personne’ together with its own research on the person and the community. Landsberg and Mounier set a Catholic personalism against the non-confessional approach of ON. Thus Landsberg provided ‘Quelques réflexions sur l’idée chrétienne de la personne’, and presented his vision of saints as the culmination of personhood.<sup>554</sup> Following this paradigm, Mounier distinguished two paths (‘deux chemins’):

L’un aboutit à l’apothéose de la ‘personnalité’, à des valeurs qui vont, du plus bas degré au plus haut, de l’agressivité à la tension héroïque. Le héros en est

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<sup>549</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 377. This definition of the atom corresponds to scientific knowledge at the time, although it is obsolete today.

<sup>550</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 377.

<sup>551</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 377.

<sup>552</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 378.

<sup>553</sup> Rougemont, ‘Définition de la personne’, 378.

<sup>554</sup> Landsberg wrote: ‘La réalisation de la personne chrétienne, c’est l’accomplissement de cette nouvelle *déiformité*’, which is visible in the extreme personalisation of the saint. He continued: ‘Le *paradoxe du saint* est qu’il *devient lui-même* d’une façon beaucoup plus intense que n’importe quel autre homme, mais qu’il diffère aussi de tous les autres saints d’une manière radicale, encore qu’ils aient tous été formés dans l’imitation de la personne et de la vie du seul Christ.’, in ‘Quelques réflexions sur l’idée chrétienne de la personne’, *Esprit*, Dec. 1934, in Paul L. Landsberg, *Problèmes du personnalisme* (Collection Esprit. Paris, 1952), 23.

l'aboutissement suprême. On pourrait distinguer plusieurs embranchements, stoïciens, nietzschéen, fasciste. L'autre aboutit aux abîmes de la personne authentique, qui ne se trouve qu'en se donnant, et qui nous conduit aux mystères de l'être. Le saint est l'issue de cette voie comme le héros est l'issue de la première.<sup>555</sup>

The implicit inclusion of the 'Nietzschean' ON in the first category – among stoic and fascist branches – shows how much Mounier was eager to distinguish *Esprit* from the ON. The opposition between the paradigm of the hero (at ON) and the paradigm of the saint (at *Esprit*) was not totally ungrounded. While ON focused on the affirmation of personal existence through the act and heroic behaviour, *Esprit* trusted in the aspiration to sanctity and the role of the community in turning an individual into a person. These contrasts were more than mere nuances for movements seeking to trigger a revolution based on the notion of person.

Theology was, I argue, the prime source of discord between Rougemont and *Esprit* personalists. This claim will be fully substantiated in Chapter 7. Suffice it to note here that Jacques Maritain admitted that Rougemont's work on the person was useful, but, as a Thomist philosopher, he scorned the theological underpinnings – 'C'est du plus faible néo-calvinisme'.<sup>556</sup> *Esprit* was forced to publish a note in the following issue: 'nous laissons à l'auteur la responsabilité de son langage théologique.'<sup>557</sup> Reviewing Rougemont's *Politique de la personne* in 1935, Mounier wrote that his criticism resulted from two 'théologies différentes du péché originel'.<sup>558</sup> This reservation aside, Mounier emphasised a shared source of inspiration ('l'inspiration voisine de la nôtre'), acknowledging thereby the kinship between ON and *Esprit*.<sup>559</sup>

Marc also acknowledged this kinship (for which he was largely responsible with his invention of Otto Neumann) but he thought that the expression of 'personnalisme

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<sup>555</sup> 'Qu'est ce que le personnalisme', *Esprit*, 27 (December 1934), also in Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, 79.

<sup>556</sup> Maritain to Mounier, [Dec. 1934], in Jacques Petit (ed.) *Maritain-Mounier 1929-1939* (Paris, 1973), 117. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this distinction appeared in his *Trois réformateurs* as early as 1925. In 1936, Maritain started developing his own personalism, (following his *Humanisme integral*).

<sup>557</sup> in *Esprit*, 28 (Jan. 1935), 672.

<sup>558</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, 'Denis de Rougemont: Politique de la personne', *Esprit*, 30 (March 1935), 966-7.

<sup>559</sup> Mounier, 'Denis de Rougemont: Politique de la personne', 965.

communautaire' was a pleonasm.<sup>560</sup> Therefore, John Hellman, in his latest book on Alexandre Marc, was wrong to confuse the personalism of the ON with the communitarian personalism developed at *Esprit* from 1934 onwards.<sup>561</sup> The ON suspected that the communitarian overemphasis risked valuing the cohesion of the community more than personal freedom.

The communitarian emphasis was a particularity of Mounier's personalism.<sup>5</sup> Landsberg, who introduced Mounier to the personalism of Scheler, was cautious to avoid personification of a community. As Keller has shown, by translating Scheler's concepts of 'Gesamtperson' as 'personne de personnes' and of 'Lebensgemeinschaft' as 'personne collective', and then applying these concepts to all cohesive communities, Mounier falsified Scheler's initial terms.<sup>563</sup> To consider the collective person in the same way as the human person may already be seen as contravening the principle of the original personalism. Thereafter, there is a risk that the collective person may be treated with more attention than a single human person. The slide toward communitarian – and possibly collectivist – ideologies is near, as soon as one applies the concept of person to anything but a human being. This leads us to consider the controversial question of a right-wing communitarian personalism.

### **3. The diversification of personalism(s)**

It has now been established that after personalism was launched in France by the ON group, it was taken up by *Esprit*, which added the adjective 'communitarian' to the personalist revolution of ON. There were other developments of personalism in France in the mid-1930s, which remain either controversial (a right-wing communitarian personalism) or little known (the environmental personalism of the South-West of France).

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<sup>560</sup> Marc expressed his critiques in an exchange of letters regarding his possible collaboration at *Esprit* in 1935. See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 422.

<sup>561</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*.

<sup>562</sup> On the destiny and political ambivalence of the dyad 'Personne et Communauté' from 1940 onwards, see Roy, 'Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personnalisme', 42-9.

<sup>563</sup> On the adaptation of Scheler's personalism by Mounier, see Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 294; Keller, 'Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier', 121-46; Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 489-94. See also Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 418.

## A right-wing communitarian personalism

The question of a right-wing personalism has been addressed recently by two specialists, who came out with different conclusions.<sup>564</sup> According to Véronique Auzépy-Chavagnac, Jean de Fabrègues was a right-wing personalist. According to Nicolas Kessler, he was an extreme-right thinker who spoke on themes similar to the personalists. Kessler assumes there cannot be a right-wing personalism. I suggest that if there is a ‘neither right nor left’ personalism (Ordre Nouveau) and a left-wing personalism (*Esprit*), there may also be a right-wing personalism.

Jean de Fabrègues had been the secretary of Charles Maurras before taking his distance from the AF in 1930. He launched *Réaction* (1931-2) and the *Revue du siècle* (1933-4) with the motto of a ‘spiritual’ revolution. Nicolas Kessler has argued that the *Revue du siècle* (1933-4) was merely an extreme-right journal, based on a doctrine adapting Maurras in politics, Massis in literature, as well as the Thomists Henri Carteron and Garrigou-Lagrange in philosophy.<sup>565</sup> Alexandre Marc and other ON members regularly published in the *Revue du siècle*, despite the anti-revolutionary and nationalist overtones of the review.<sup>566</sup> There was a convergence on the question of a spiritual revolution, whatever this concept meant. There can be no doubt that Fabrègues was anti-revolutionary, monarchist, and nationalist.<sup>567</sup> Yet Fabrègues also emphasised the concept of the person, much like the ON personalists. In his view, the ideal ‘personne’ was the king; he wondered: ‘n’incarne-t-il pas la personne opposée à l’individu, par cette fonction royale qui dépasse l’homme et n’est-il pas le

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<sup>564</sup> Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*; Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 223-49. I thank Christian Roy for remarking that the qualification of ‘personalist’ has also been applied to the right-wing organicist doctrine of Othmar Spann in Austria. See Bernard Delfgaauw, *Twentieth-Century philosophy* (Dublin, 1969) 113.

<sup>565</sup> Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 248.

<sup>566</sup> See Denis de Rougemont, ‘La jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne’, *La Revue du siècle*, 2 (May 1933), 7-9. See also the analysis of Jean de Fabrègues’s presentation of the survey in Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 270-83.

<sup>567</sup> On the nationalist, monarchist, and Catholic allegiances of Fabrègues, contrasted to Mounier especially, see Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*, 186-214, 235.

seul à pouvoir ainsi symboliser la continuité de la nation’?<sup>568</sup> If the distinction between person and individual suffices to define personalism, Fabrègues was a right-wing personalist.

In 1935, Albert Ollivier, an ON militant, was able to grasp the difference between ON and the right-wing press (whether personalist or not). He assessed the *Revue du XXe siècle* (gathering contributors of the late *Réaction* and *Revue du siècle*) in the following terms:

Ce qui l'éloigne [de l'O.N.], c'est moins son monarchisme que sa haine de toute doctrine précise. Cette phobie engendre inévitablement un certain flottement dans leur position, notamment dans leur nationalisme. Car le fait national pose un authentique dilemme. [...] Pour nous cela nous conduit au fédéralisme [...], tandis que nos amis [...] se retranchent sur la position traditionnelle de la France grande et forte, « impériale et coloniale ».<sup>569</sup>

Thus, the disagreement between ON and young right-wing writers was neither the revolution, nor the restoration of French monarchy. The bone of contention was the question of national sovereignty.<sup>570</sup>

In 1936, Fabrègues gave a definitive answer to the question of right-wing personalism.<sup>571</sup> Fabrègues thought that personalism did not apply to the majority of people: ‘il y a surtout des hommes « communs ». Sont-ils « libres », sont-ils « conscients », sont-ils des « personnes » [...] c'est là tout le nœud de ce qui nous sépare de M. de Rougemont et de M. Mounier’.<sup>572</sup> Unlike Rougemont (ON) and Mounier (*Esprit*), he thought that it was impossible to organise society on the principle of personal responsibility solely: there was a need for more guarantees against anarchy.<sup>573</sup> For the time being, Fabrègues doubted that the ‘average’

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<sup>568</sup> Quoted in Auzépy-Chavagnac, *Jean de Fabrègues et la Jeune Droite Catholique. Aux sources de la Révolution nationale*, 191.

<sup>569</sup> Albert Ollivier, 'Les autres et nous. II. Le groupe de "la Revue du XXe siècle"', *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 2 (15 May 1935), 4.

<sup>570</sup> See further analysis of this notion in Chapter 5.

<sup>571</sup> Jean de Fabrègues, 'La question du "Personnalisme"', *Combat*, 13 (March 1937), 47.

<sup>572</sup> Fabrègues, 'La question du "Personnalisme"', 47.

<sup>573</sup> ‘Nous ne croyons donc pas qu'on puisse « organiser tout l'appareil social sur le principe de la responsabilité personnelle ». Ce serait là, à la fois une société trop facile et trop lourde pour l'homme.’ Fabrègues, 'La question du "Personnalisme"', 47.

people had the capacity to act freely and consciously.<sup>574</sup> Following *Esprit*, Fabrègues called for a communitarian and personalist revolution: ‘On fait une révolution communautaire pour que l’individu soit mieux gardé, et même de lui-même, la personne est à l’autre bout : elle est *ce qui doit être tenté, non ce qui existe au départ.*’<sup>575</sup> Thus Fabrègues was a right-wing and pessimist personalist, who doubted that the majority of the people had enough self-discipline or *maîtrise de soi* to act as persons.

Unlike ON and *Esprit*, Fabrègues did not create a personalist group among his peers. There was no constituted group of personalist right-wing writers. This particularly contrasts with the success of the *Esprit* groups, which formed personalist networks in the French province and abroad.

### **The *Esprit* groups diversifies personalism(s)**

It is indispensable to close this study of the diversification of personalism(s) with the various *Esprit* groups that were created across France and Europe, from 1934 onwards. *Esprit* drew from the contributions of sympathisers – or ‘Amis d’*Esprit*’ as they were called from July 1933 onwards – from all over France, as well as the French-speaking parts of Belgium and Switzerland.<sup>576</sup> It lies far beyond the purpose of this study to detail all the groups of ‘Amis d’ *Esprit*’, which listed fifty correspondents in metropolitan France and over thirty correspondents abroad.<sup>577</sup> One may refer to Michel Winock for an account of the atmosphere

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<sup>574</sup> ‘Qui dit personne responsable, dit liberté d’agir. Il s’agit de savoir si l’homme politique, l’homme social, est bien capable d’agir librement et consciemment. [...] Cela n’est vrai que pour l’homme et dans son destin privé. Cela ne l’est pas pour la moyenne d’entre nous.’ Fabrègues, ‘La question du "Personnalisme"’, 47.

<sup>575</sup> Fabrègues, ‘La question du "Personnalisme"’, 47. The emphasis is his.

<sup>576</sup> On Switzerland, see next chapter. On Belgium, see Jean-Louis Jadouille, ‘Les Groupes *Esprit* de Belgique durant l’entre-deux-guerres’, *Emmanuel Mounier en Belgique. 70 ans d’Esprit* (Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, 2002), 49-63. See also the contributions of Etienne Deschamps, ‘Le groupe de l’*Esprit nouveau* (1931-1936) des nouvelles relèves belges dans l’action’, Francis Balace, ‘Itinéraires croisés d’une génération catholique liégeoise face aux idéaux non-conformistes’, and Geneviève Duchenne, ‘Les nouvelles relèves en Belgique francophone (1926-1936). Une source pour l’euro-péisme ?’, in Olivier Dard and Etienne Deschamps (eds), *Les relèves en Europe d’un après-guerre à l’autre. Racines, réseaux, projets et postérités* (Brussels, 2005, forthcoming).

<sup>577</sup> I refer to the list of correspondents in the pink leaflets (p.22-3), preceding the special issue on Switzerland, *Esprit*, 61 (1 Oct. 1937).



at the Parisian journal *Esprit* and of the main groups that were formed in the province.<sup>578</sup> In the 1930s, the personalism of *Esprit* remained largely limited to a French-speaking audience in France (with its the colonies and protectorates), Belgium, Canada, and Switzerland. The *Esprit* groups of Spain and German Switzerland did not represent more than half a dozen committed people, and it seems difficult to speak of groups for Britain, Holland, and Poland, which also counted a few ‘Amis d’*Esprit*’.

There is one group, in the South West of France, which deserves particular attention: the ‘Groupe de Bordeaux des amis d’*Esprit*’, created at the beginning of 1934, was a model for the local personalist cells established by *Esprit* all over France, until the main protagonists, Bernard Charbonneau and Jacques Ellul, resigned from *Esprit* in early 1938. This group developed a third branch of French personalism, distinct from the ON and from *Esprit*, which remains little known despite its tremendous interest as one of the early manifestations of political ecology.<sup>579</sup>

‘Le groupe des gascons’ – in Henri-Irénée Marrou’s mischievous expression – consisted in all the personalist groups in the South-West of France (Bordeaux, Pau, Toulouse and Bayonne).<sup>580</sup> The impulse came from the Bordeaux group, animated by Bernard Charbonneau and Jacques Ellul,<sup>581</sup> but also the Alsatian Protestant and physicist Alfred Kastler (a future Nobel Prize of Physics who would renounce atom physics after Hiroshima) and André Bazin (who became one of the most influential film critics in the 1940s-60s). The

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<sup>578</sup> See his chapter ‘Une revue et des hommes’, which conveys a sense of the friendship that existed at *Esprit*, Winock, *“Esprit”. Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 139-75.

<sup>579</sup> See Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 348-9; Keller, ‘Le personnalisme de l’entre-deux-guerres’, 541-54; Christian Roy, ‘Aux sources de l’écologie politique: Le personnalisme “gascon” de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 27 (Apr. 1992), 67-100.

<sup>580</sup> ‘Une promesse de Gascon’ is a promise that is not kept. Henri-Irénée Marrou (pseudonym Davenson in *Esprit*) was the leading historian at *Esprit*. His views will be considered in Chapter 7. See also Roy, ‘Aux sources de l’écologie politique: Le personnalisme “gascon” de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul’, 67-100.

<sup>581</sup> Bernard Charbonneau (1910-96) is less famous than Jacques Ellul (1912-94), although Ellul acknowledged being very indebted to him. After the Second World War, Charbonneau developed the idea that one is ‘condamné à la liberté’ by the power of the technical means now available. He shared this theme with Rougemont, who expressed it in Denis de Rougemont, *Lettres sur la bombe atomique* (Paris, 1946). Having sown the seeds of the ecological movement, Charbonneau published a thoughtful critique of it: *Le feu vert, autocritique du mouvement écologique* (1980). See also Jacques Prades (ed.) *Bernard Charbonneau: une vie entière à dénoncer la grande imposture* (Toulouse, 1997). Esp. the ‘intellectual companionship’ of Charbonneau and Ellul: Daniel Cerezuelle, ‘La critique de la modernité chez Charbonneau. Aspects d’un compagnonage intellectuel’, in Patrick Troude-Chastenet (ed.) *Sur Jacques Ellul* (Bordeaux-le-Bouscat, 1994), 63-74.

Pau group included Jacques Thérond, the Catholic priest Jean Plaquevent,<sup>582</sup> Maurice Soutou (better known under the name of Jean-Marie – under which he made it to the General Secretariat of the Quai d’Orsay without any degree or family connections), and the pastor Roger Jézéquel (who edited *Hic et Nunc* with Rougemont until 1936, while writing under the pseudonym of Roger Breuil in *Esprit*).

In the South-West, the distinction between Parisian personalist groupings had little significance, and the ‘Amis d’*Esprit*’ were often ON sympathisers as well.<sup>583</sup> Although they were closer to ON than *Esprit* in terms of their anti-communitarian approach, Jacques Ellul and Bernard Charbonneau preferred to be affiliated with *Esprit* because it was less Parisian and had a larger audience. However, in 1937-8, they accused Mounier of authoritarian and centralist tendencies (namely of trying to control their activities and debates from Paris), while at the same time being reluctant to shape a coherent revolutionary doctrine.<sup>584</sup> When Mounier died however, Ellul also invoked theological reasons for his disagreement with Mounier,<sup>585</sup> and Charbonneau also became very critical of the religious personalism of *Esprit*.<sup>586</sup>

Ordre Nouveau emphasised federalism and *Esprit* stressed community, while Charbonneau and Ellul called attention to the necessity for a selective appropriation of technique. Their personalist manifesto, published recently, shows how Ellul and Charbonneau were able to give a new development to the ON’s personalist revolution. In 1935-6, Ellul and Charbonneau drew up some ‘Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste’ and distributed them

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<sup>582</sup> The Abbé Plaquevent was then serving at the Couvent du Bon Pasteur in Pau. He was the confessor of Alexandre Marc, who tried to establish his family nearby, before moving to Aix-en-Provence where it was easier to provide for his wife and children. One of Abbé Plaquevent’s contributions to personalism was the historical note quoted in Chapter 1: ‘Individu et personne’, *Esprit*, 64 (March 1938), 579-608.

<sup>583</sup> Roy, ‘Aux sources de l’écologie politique: Le personnalisme “gascon” de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul’, 78.

<sup>584</sup> See Patrick Troude-Chastenet, ‘Jacques Ellul: une jeunesse personnaliste’, *Revue française d’histoire des idées politiques*, 9 (1st semester 1999), 73-4.

<sup>585</sup> Jacques Ellul, ‘Pourquoi je me suis séparé de Mounier’, *Réforme*, 265 (15 April 1950).

<sup>586</sup> In 1980, he explained that for him freedom was first and foremost individual, attacking the personalist fashion ‘dans certains milieux chrétiens ou post-chrétiens d’opposer la ‘personne humaine’ dont la liberté est engagée dans l’univers et dans l’histoire à l’individu égoïste et désincarné » ; ce qui permet de compléter les libertés abstraites des Droits de l’homme par les libertés concrètes de l’usine et de la caserne. Car la Personne Humaine est née sous Staline et Pétain.’, in Bernard Charbonneau, *Je fus (Essai sur la liberté)* (Pau, 1980), 28.

to the *Esprit* groups of the South-West of France.<sup>587</sup> The main thesis – which would make Ellul famous thirty years later<sup>588</sup> – was that politics were powerless in the face of technological supremacy, which controlled capitalist, fascist and communist regimes in the same way.<sup>589</sup> This thesis was unique at the time, although the concern with technology was shared by other personalists, such as Berdiaev and Dandieu.<sup>590</sup> The latter defined technology as a process of rationalisation governed by a principle of economy (technology was not to be mistaken with mechanisation).<sup>591</sup> Technology was an opportunity for Aron and Dandieu in *La Révolution nécessaire* (they thought it would allow the end of the proletarian condition), whereas Ellul had a more pessimistic approach, as Loubet del Bayle has shown.<sup>592</sup>

In all probability, Ellul and Charbonneau's draft personalist manifesto inspired Mounier to write his *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* in 1936.<sup>593</sup> Both manifestos advocated a third way and a 'Révolution personnaliste'.<sup>594</sup> They borrowed from the personalism of ON without mentioning it. Ellul and Charbonneau implicitly used the ON economic model – which will be studied further in Chapter 5 – and thus the economy was divided into the private sector (under the laws of the market) and the collective sector supplying the products necessary to the 'minimum vital gratuit' and covering, as far as possible, 'le travail indifférencié [...] effectué par un service civil'.<sup>595</sup> Similarly, Mounier's

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<sup>587</sup> See Patrick Troude-Chastenet, 'Présentation' of Bernard Charbonneau and Jacques Ellul, 'Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, 9 (1st semester 1999), 159.

<sup>588</sup> With his Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York, 1964).

<sup>589</sup> On the all-pervasive technological phenomenon, see points 17 and 21 in particular, Charbonneau and Ellul, 'Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste', 164-5. In the conclusion to their draft personalist manifesto, Ellul and Charbonneau called for a 'cité ascétique', see Charbonneau and Ellul, 'Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste', 177. This foreshadowed the 1970s theses of radical ecology, based on a principle of voluntary austerity. Ivan Illich for instance readily acknowledged his indebtedness to Ellul.

<sup>590</sup> In 1933, Berdiaev defined technology as: 'façon d'obtenir le meilleur résultat au prix du moindre effort', in Nicolas Berdiaev, *L'Homme et la machine* (Paris, 1933), 9.

<sup>591</sup> Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, 'Aux origines de la pensée de Jacques Ellul? Technique et société dans la réflexion des mouvements personnalistes des années 30', in Patrick Troude-Chastenet (ed.) *Sur Jacques Ellul* (Bordeaux-le-Bouscat, 1994), 27-33.

<sup>592</sup> Loubet del Bayle, 'Aux origines de la pensée de Jacques Ellul? Technique et société dans la réflexion des mouvements personnalistes des années 30', 34.

<sup>593</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*.

<sup>594</sup> Charbonneau and Ellul, 'Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste', 165-7, 171-3.

<sup>595</sup> Charbonneau and Ellul, 'Directives pour un manifeste personnaliste', 174.

*Manifeste au service du personalisme* held that in the personalist society, the sector of vital needs would be provided for by a public service.<sup>596</sup>

Following the ON idea of a federation, Mounier also suggested that economics and politics would be based on local communities and ‘patries’, united in a federation. Mounier’s personal input, in praise of labour and community life, distinguished him from the ON and from the Gascon personalists. Mounier shared with liberal-conservatives an understanding of labour as morally beneficial for the working classes; at the same time he condemned ‘aristocratic’ leisure.<sup>597</sup> Mounier’s view of labour as moral discipline was foreign to the original personalism of ON.<sup>598</sup> Thus, the ‘aristocratic’ character of ON has been opposed to the ‘communitarian’ emphasis of *Esprit*.<sup>599</sup>

As early as 1935, Ellul and Charbonneau criticised the ideology of productivity from an ecological point of view, which was neither idealising the land (unlike the ‘retour à la terre’ of right-wing movements), nor glorifying the past. They did not appeal to a mythical Golden Age (usually Mediaeval in character), unlike Berdiaev, Maritain, and their followers. In their own view, personalism was grounded in ‘le sentiment de la nature, force révolutionnaire’.<sup>600</sup> Ellul and Charbonneau attacked advertising and marketing as early as 1935.<sup>601</sup> They wrote

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<sup>596</sup> See Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*.

<sup>597</sup> Mounier idealized labour: ‘tout travail, même le plus ingrat, est par ailleurs un remarquable instrument de discipline ; il arrache l’individu à lui-même, et développe la camaraderie dans l’œuvre et la communion dans le service rendu, qui préparent des communautés plus profondes’ and furthermore ‘le travail est une obligation universelle. Qui ne travaille pas, et le peut, ne mange pas. Ne sont exclus de cette loi, sauf vocations spéciales à déterminer, que les physiquement incapables de toutes catégories.’ Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, 169.

<sup>598</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>599</sup> See esp. Pascal Balmand, ‘Intellectuel(s) dans l’*Ordre Nouveau* (1933-1938): une aristocratie de prophètes’, in D. Bonnaud-Lamotte and J.-L. Rispaïl (eds), *Intellectuel(s) des années trente. Entre le rêve et l’action* (Paris, 1989); Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 231-47, 289-95.

<sup>600</sup> Quoted by Roy, ‘Aux sources de l’écologie politique: Le personalisme “gascon” de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul’, 71. See also Troude-Chastenet, ‘Jacques Ellul: une jeunesse personaliste’, 63.

<sup>601</sup> See *Bulletin du groupe de Bordeaux & [sic] des Amis d’Esprit*, 2 (Dec. 1935), quoted by Roy, ‘Aux sources de l’écologie politique: Le personalisme “gascon” de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul’, 81.

witty critiques of advertisements in the ON *Bulletin de liaison*, which would constitute the premise for Ellul's *Nouvelle exégèse des lieux communs*.<sup>602</sup>

Thus, the Bordeaux group was characterized by a radical critique of technology and industrial society. It was also distinctively 'Protestant', although Charbonneau himself was an agnostic. Ellul's intellectual formation included Marx, Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth.<sup>6</sup> Despite similar approaches with Ellul, resulting from the influence of Kierkegaard and Barth in particular, Rougemont's contacts with the Bordeaux *Esprit* group seem to have been limited in the 1930s. I have not been able to trace any correspondence, for example. However, Rougemont cooperated with Charbonneau in the *Esprit* congress of 1937, as Charbonneau took part in Rougemont's workshop against 'totalitarian' regimes. Turning to ecology in the 1960s and 1970s, Rougemont would meet their concerns again.<sup>604</sup>

In sum, Rougemont was the most active figure in building bridges between the personalism of ON and *Esprit*. Even after the official break, the doctrines of ON and *Esprit* remained interrelated. The two main French personalist movements, ON and *Esprit*, were most distant between the Winter 1933-4 and the summer of 1936, at the very period when Rougemont was away from Paris. This gives an indication of the effectiveness of Rougemont's mediating role. It is not to idealize the role of Rougemont to say that he was a mediator, as he may have held the position of a mediator at the expense of originality. As Abbé Jean Plaquevent once told Marc: 'votre Rougemont est un *exprimeur*, et non un créateur'.<sup>605</sup> This position of mediator and *expresser* would be actively sought by Rougemont in the post-war period, when he acted as an intermediary between the militants for a European

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<sup>602</sup> See Ellul 'Exégèse des lieux communs: personnalité partout', *Bulletin de liaison*, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 12 (1 June 1936), 4; Charbonneau, 'Exégèse des lieux communs: du prestige moral', *Bulletin de liaison*, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 13 (1 July 1936), 2.

<sup>603</sup> Troude-Chastenet, 'Jacques Ellul: une jeunesse personaliste', 55-75.

<sup>604</sup> Later in life, Rougemont would develop many of the themes of the environmental personalism of Ellul and Charbonneau. Whereas the 'Gascons' showed environmental concern from the 1930s, it was only in the 1960s that Rougemont came to study the ecological implications of personalism, joining them in the ECOROPA group. For a synthesis of Rougemont's personalism emphasising ecology and regionalism, see Rougemont, *L'Avenir est notre affaire*.

<sup>605</sup> Alexandre Marc, 'Vers une lumière qui ne s'éteint jamais', 'Denis de Rougemont. De Neuchâtel à l'Europe', *Nouvelle Revue Neuchâteloise*, 47 (Autumn 1995), 64.

federation and more established milieux, whether political or cultural.<sup>606</sup> In 1930s Europe, Rougemont played a leading role in federating personalists and connecting them to the wider world.

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<sup>606</sup> In particular, see his role as founder and president of the 'Centre Européen de la Culture' (1950-85) and in the various 'Congrès pour la liberté de la culture' (1950-75), in Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne*; Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris 1950-1975*.

## Chapter 4. Federation or failure of personalism(s)

From 1932 onwards, Rougemont stood out as a mediator between the different personalist movements, not in the sense that he was a neutral arbiter, but in so far as he sought to federate them. Mounier wrote in his diary: ‘De Rougemont me le disait hier : « C’est son caractère collectif qui caractérise surtout notre mouvement : pas de génie, mais un faisceau de foi et de travail ! »’<sup>607</sup> Not being a genius, Rougemont may have sought to play a role as mediator because he was not of the highest calibre as a writer and a philosopher. But Rougemont also had faith in personalism as a united, or rather federated, movement. How could personalists convince of the necessity of personal relationships if they themselves stood divided by bitter quarrels? As international tensions grew and the polarisation of European societies built up, Rougemont intensified his efforts to federate the various personalist movements.

Three stages may be distinguished in Rougemont’s efforts to federate the personalist movements. The episode of the ‘Cahier de revendications’ in 1932, and the debate that followed in 1933, mark the first stage of Rougemont’s *engagement* for a common front of personalist writers. In the second stage, between 1934 and 1936, Rougemont stood isolated in his attempts to radicalise and confederate the French and Swiss personalist movements. The very repetition of his attempts emphasises the failure of the personalist revolution in the 1930s. These attempts were not entirely in vain, however, since they represented a defence of a certain European culture. Finally, after 1936, Rougemont’s endeavours to federate personalists in France and in Switzerland illustrate his ‘active pessimism’ in politics, drawn from the motto of William the Silent: ‘One need not hope in order to undertake; nor succeed in order to persevere’. Thus, Rougemont’s role as a mediator oscillates between the desired federation of personalist groups and the apparent failure of their revolution.

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<sup>607</sup> Mounier, *Mounier et sa génération, Lettres, carnets et inédits*, 100.

## 1. The episode of the 'Cahier de revendications' (1932-3)

In 1932, a common cause of revolutionary youth appeared under the following slogans: 'ni droite ni gauche', 'jeunesse révolutionnaire', and 'primauté du spirituel'. The common cause was presented in the 'Cahier de revendications', which Rougemont edited at the *NRF* in December 1932.<sup>608</sup> The importance of the 'Cahier de revendications' for establishing the idea of a common front of revolutionary youth is well known since Loubet del Bayle's classic study of *Les Non-conformistes des années trente*.<sup>609</sup> The cultural historian Michel Trebitsch has given us a revised analysis of the 'Cahier de revendications': he has shown that it suited ON to uphold a common front, and that Rougemont promoted the ON political tactic instead of being an impartial editor.<sup>610</sup> Thus, the common front of revolutionary youth presented in the 'Cahier de revendications' has been proved to be a political device.<sup>611</sup> For its political agenda, Rougemont's 'Cahier de revendications' occupied a central place in French intellectual life.

One question remains unanswered: how did a young and relatively obscure Swiss writer manage to edit some fifty pages – mostly signed by unknown writers – at the most prestigious literary journal of the time? Bruno Ackermann has given elements of an answer with his research on Rougemont's moves in 1932, and once again, I acknowledge my indebtedness to him.<sup>612</sup> In this section, I emphasise two crucial points, which have been overlooked thus far, without which it is impossible to answer the above question. Firstly, the international dimension of the 'Cahier' has been neglected. It is significant that the project at the *NRF* followed on from Rougemont's article 'Cause commune', published in the Swiss

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<sup>608</sup> See esp. Rougemont, 'Cahier de Revendications (Présentation)', 801.

<sup>609</sup> The analysis of Loubet del Bayle is a classic of the history of political thought in France. Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 170-6. Republished in 2001.

<sup>610</sup> See Trebitsch, 'Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le "Cahier de revendications" de décembre 1932', esp. 211-12. On the federative role of ON, see also Loubet del Bayle's Chapter 2: 'Le rôle de "conciliateur" de l'Ordre Nouveau', Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*.

<sup>611</sup> For a recent re-evaluation of the 'common front', see 'Les nouvelles relèves à l'heure du "non-conformisme" (1932-1933)', Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 151-78.

<sup>612</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 208-22.



journal *Présence*.<sup>613</sup> It is my contention that his role in French cultural life and in the European personalist movement cannot be understood without taking into account his Swiss Protestant background.<sup>614</sup> Secondly, Rougemont's literary approach (overlooked by political historians so far) explains much of the controversy subsequent to the publication of the 'Cahier'. Finally, I conclude that Rougemont articulated the first significant manifestation of personalism as a non-marxist revolutionary movement.

## Editor and contestant

When Jean Paulhan invited young revolutionaries (most of them unknown) to publish their claims in the *NRF*, he was responding to a move towards the politicisation of literature. He had a gift for titles: 'A la réflexion, *Revendications* ou *Cahier de revendications* me semble un titre parfait' – suggesting the 'Cahiers de doléances' and the French Revolution.<sup>615</sup> The 'Cahier de revendications' took up forty-five pages of the December 1932 issue of *NRF*.<sup>616</sup> Rougemont's role as an editor was ambivalent. 'En [sa] qualité de « compère-introducteur »', as Georges Izard put it, he introduced the contributors, but he was also their accomplice.<sup>617</sup> On the one hand, Rougemont acted as a go-between young revolutionary writers and the prestigious literary institution of the *NRF* (he asked for contributions and edited the texts). On the other hand, Rougemont proved to be an active participant rather than an impartial editor.

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<sup>613</sup> Rougemont, 'Cause commune'.

<sup>614</sup> He would make an interesting case-study for a research on the politico-literary relations between France and French Switzerland. The ambivalence of his attitude vis-à-vis Switzerland, at once showed as a model for the world and summoned to give up its prejudices and pettiness, is expressed for instance in Denis de Rougemont, *Mission ou démission de la Suisse* (Neuchâtel, 1940); Rougemont, *La Suisse ou l'histoire d'un peuple heureux*. See also the works of a collaborator of Rougemont at the European Centre for Culture, obviously influenced by Rougemont, André Reszler, *Mythes et identité de la Suisse* (Geneva, 1986).

<sup>615</sup> Paulhan to Rougemont, 28 Oct. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, Correspondance.

<sup>616</sup> For a summary, see Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 156-7.

<sup>617</sup> Georges Izard to Rougemont, non dated (Oct. or Nov. 1932), Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

Nicolas Kessler is mistaken when he writes that Rougemont's presentation was apolitical and 'ne procède [...] d'aucune arrière pensée idéologique'.<sup>618</sup> Kessler takes for granted that there is no political force behind the *NRF*'s 'Cahier': 'Les tendances les plus diverses s'y côtoient, sans qu'aucune ne tente jamais de tirer la couverture à elle. [...] On ne saurait mieux souligner l'étonnante neutralité de la « communauté d'attitudes essentielles » célébrée par Rougemont.'<sup>619</sup> Far from being neutral, Rougemont's presentation was a piece of personalist propaganda. Michel Trebitsch has given us an insightful presentation of the 'Cahier' by underlining the 'bizarreries du sommaire', and showing that the awkward selection of contributors boosted the importance of ON as a revolutionary group.<sup>620</sup> However, it is surprising that, so far, no study of the 'Cahier de revendications' has sought to explain how a relatively obscure French Swiss writer could be responsible for putting together the claims of French revolutionary youth in the prestigious *NRF*.

Several factors contribute to explain Rougemont's responsibilities in 1932. He was not a stranger to Paulhan.<sup>621</sup> When he was entrusted with editing the 'Cahier de revendications', Rougemont had already published six book reviews and a study on Goethe in the *NRF*.<sup>622</sup> It was a favour on Paulhan's part that a young writer would get to publish several book reviews in the *NRF*: such reviews were remunerated and usually set aside for renowned writers. Besides literary tastes, Rougemont shared with Paulhan the ideal of transcending political cleavages, the categorical exclusion of Action Française, and the search for a non-communist doctrine of action.<sup>623</sup> A last factor may have encouraged Paulhan to delegate the edition of the 'Cahier de revendications' to Rougemont: the very fact that Rougemont was an outsider vis-à-

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<sup>618</sup> Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 217.

<sup>619</sup> Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 217-18.

<sup>620</sup> Michel Trebitsch spoke of the 'bizarreries du sommaire', in Trebitsch, 'Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le "Cahier de revendications" de décembre 1932', 212.

<sup>621</sup> See their correspondence in August 1932, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 315.

<sup>622</sup> Rougemont, 'Le silence de Goethe', 480-94. (Also in Rougemont, *Les Personnes du drame*, 23-40.) In March 1932, Jean Paulhan wrote to Marcel Jouhandeau 'A propos de Goethe, lisez le *Silence de G.* par Denis de Rougemont, que j'ai trouvé beau', quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 206-7. See Rougemont's contribution to the 'Décades de Pontigny', 8-18 Sept. 1932: Rougemont, 'Goethe médiateur', 11-21. Also in Rougemont, *Les Personnes du drame*, 41-9.

<sup>623</sup> Rougemont largely followed the line that Paulhan tried to give to *NRF*. On this line see esp. Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 136.

vis the French political debate, as a Swiss and a Protestant. Rougemont was not to be caught in the political cleavage *laïcité* v. Catholicism that deeply marked the Third Republic. For an impartial presentation however, Paulhan made a poor choice in Rougemont.

The aim of the ‘Cahier de revendication’, as Rougemont admitted to Paul Nizan, was revolutionary: ‘Il s’agit purement et simplement, dans mon esprit, de propagande révolutionnaire, et non pas d’une enquête destinée à renseigner le public bourgeois.’<sup>624</sup> Thereafter, he had no qualms in providing *NRF* readers with a biased presentation. Rougemont started by suggesting that the contributions represented groupings,<sup>625</sup> whereas in fact they were individual. Then, Rougemont discriminated against the two Marxist authors (Henri Lefebvre<sup>626</sup> and Paul Nizan<sup>627</sup>), by not introducing Marxism along with the other movements, and expressing strong reservations vis-à-vis a possible cooperation with communism.<sup>628</sup> Rougemont had managed to secure the contribution of communists by emphasising revolutionary tactic, whilst claiming to respect doctrinal differences between Marxists and non-Marxist movements.<sup>629</sup>

Jean Paulhan made no claims to control Rougemont’s choice of contributors, although he gave his opinion on the various articles submitted, and strongly advised Rougemont to

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<sup>624</sup> Rougemont to Nizan, Draft letter non dated (Autumn 1932), Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

<sup>625</sup> ‘Des groupes tels que l’*Ordre Nouveau, Combat, Esprit, Plans, Réaction*, par leur volonté proclamée de rupture, et plus encore par leurs revendications constructives, révèlent peut-être, dans leur diversité, les premières lignes de force d’une nouvelle révolution française.’ The reference to 1789 shed light on the title suggested by Paulhan. Rougemont, ‘Cahier de Revendications (Présentation)’, 801.

<sup>626</sup> Henri Lefebvre (1901-91), philosopher and sociologist. Member of the Communist Party between 1927 and 1958. Since 1929, Lefebvre was one of the main contributors to the *Revue marxiste* and a defender of the Association des Ecrivains et Artistes révolutionnaires (AEAR), founded in January 1932 and directed by Paul Vaillant-Couturier under the control of the Communist Party.

<sup>627</sup> Paul Nizan (1905-1940) remains one of the most famous Communist writer of the 1930s. A former contributor to the *Revue Marxiste*, he became a permanent member of the Communist Party in 1932 and one of the most active member of the Association des Ecrivains et Artistes révolutionnaires (AEAR). See the special issue on ‘Paul Nizan et les années trente’, *Aden*, 2 (Oct. 2003).

<sup>628</sup> Marxism was presented with great reservations: ‘Il se peut qu’il y trouve quelques appuis occasionnels; et certains de leurs objectifs respectifs sont communs...’ Rougemont, ‘Cahier de Revendications (Présentation)’, 801.

<sup>629</sup> See the letter from Rougemont to Nizan quoted above. Rougemont added: ‘Sans vouloir en aucune façon masquer les oppositions irréductibles qui séparent ces divers groupes, je pense qu’il serait de bonne tactique que l’accent fût mis, de tous côtés, sur le refus de dissocier la pensée et l’action, qui nous oppose à l’anarchie du monde capitaliste.’ See Rougemont to Nizan, Draft letter non dated (Autumn 1932), Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

abandon the papers of Marc and Sylveire.<sup>630</sup> Rougemont did not follow Paulhan's advice, nor did he give in to pressure from those at ON who were disappointed not to participate. Indeed, it has been mentioned already that a crisis had erupted within the ON group on 9 November 1934, when Daniel-Rops complained that he had been left out of Rougemont's project for the *NRF*.<sup>631</sup> Unable to extend the survey, Rougemont may have suggested that the names of ON members be added to one of the articles already written. This suggestion – or rather the rumour of it – infuriated two early ON members, Pierre-Olivier Lapie and Gabriel Rey.<sup>632</sup> As president of ON, Jacques Naville insisted that the contributions should not be made in the name of the ON group, but only as individual opinions.<sup>633</sup> The crisis worsened rapidly.

Before the publication of the 'Cahier', ON lost Lapie, Naville, Poncet, and Rey (i.e. a third of the official members of ON).<sup>634</sup> While the 'Cahier' was the alleged reason, one can doubt that it was 'la cause déterminante' of this crisis.<sup>635</sup> It seemed to result from a clash of personalities (Alexandre Marc, the founder of ON, was not the only difficult character), as well as a conflict over the meaning of the 'spiritual' revolution. The actual reason for the dispute was made public the following year, when Lapie attacked the Catholic allegiances of

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<sup>630</sup> Paulhan wrote to Rougemont: 'Lefebvre me semble excellent [...] ; Nizan, un peu sommaire, mais amusant [...] ; Lamour, acceptable ; Maulnier tout à fait excellent de pensée [...] ; Dandieu, fort maladroit [...] Mounier, pas du tout déplaisant [...]. Je me passerais fort bien de René Dupuis : mais il est vrai qu'il représente quelque chose qui a droit à l'existence.' By contrast, Paulhan strongly advised Rougemont to leave aside the contributions of Sylveire and Marc, the former seeming 'purement verbal, insignifiant et criard' and the latter 'banal, plat et tout à fait creux.', see Paulhan's letter to Rougemont, 15 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, Correspondance.

<sup>631</sup> Daniel-Rops to Jacques Naville, 9 Nov. 1932; and Daniel-Rops to Rougemont, 13 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>632</sup> P.O. Lapie to Rougemont, 9 Nov. 1932; Gabriel Rey to Rougemont, 13 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>633</sup> Jacques Naville to Rougemont, 10 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>634</sup> 'Après deux années d'expériences consciencieuse et approfondie [sic], nous sommes arrivées [sic] à cette conclusion, au cours de deux récents entretiens, que l'Ordre Nouveau est un mouvement plein d'équivoques et de contradictions internes auxquelles il ne nous est plus possible dorénavant de collaborer. Veuillez trouver ici notre démission. [...] Signé : P.O. Lapie; J. Naville; A. Poncet; G. Rey.' 'Lettre destinée aux membres du Groupe de l'Ordre Nouveau par laquelle les signataires donnent leur démission de ce groupe', 13 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2'.

<sup>635</sup> Loubet del Bayle wrote: 'La cause déterminante fut peut-être même d'ordre purement anecdotique : les « dissidents » avaient été ulcérés, en décembre 1932, de n'avoir pas été invités à collaborer au « Cahier de Revendications » préparé pour *La nouvelle revue française* par Denis de Rougemont.' Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 103 n.20.

Daniel-Rops and Alexandre Marc, under the guise of a ‘Polémique cordiale’ with ON.<sup>636</sup> Lapie insinuated that ON had rallied the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>637</sup> When Lapie and Poncet – who edited *Mouvements, Bulletin d’information sur les tendances nouvelles* – resigned, ON lost a supporting review. Thereafter, it launched its own journal (first issue in May 1933), ‘que l’on imprime à Ligugé, à l’ombre du monastère bénédictin’, Lapie reproached.<sup>638</sup> Besides this long term consequence, the incident of the resignation reveals the frailty of the ON group, and emphasises the significance the ‘Cahier de revendications’ as the first public manifestation of ON.

Not only did the *NRF* provide young writers with a significant remuneration,<sup>639</sup> it also represented an exceptional opportunity to reach a wide audience. Until the Autumn of 1932, ON remained voluntarily restricted to limited circles. At the beginning of November 1932, Robert Aron started investigating the possibilities for ON to expand, ‘par un groupement des « Amis des Consultations de Paris », qui participerait aux manifestations et/ou à la propagande de l’ON.’<sup>640</sup> In December 1932, the ‘Cahier de revendications’ in the *NRF* was an unprecedented opportunity for ON to enlarge its public. In this way, Rougemont’s connections in the literary world served the ON revolutionary cause.

The predominance of ON in the ‘Cahier’ was unmistakable: six out of thirteen contributors were ON members.<sup>641</sup> Marc and Dupuis claimed to write for the group ‘Combat’,

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<sup>636</sup> N.D.L.R. ‘Polémique cordiale – L’Ordre Nouveau’, *Mouvements*, 9 (June 1933), 1.

<sup>637</sup> This suspicion, albeit exaggerated, was justified by the close ties that Marc developed with the Dominican monastery of Juvisy and the Abbé Plaquevent (who informally acted as a mediator between the Catholic personalists and the ecclesiastical authorities in France). See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 381-3. In 1933, Lapie shifted to the left, while Marc joined the Roman Catholic Church. On the role of Dandieu’s death, the Abbé Plaquevent, and Denis de Rougemont in Marc’s decision to be baptised, see Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 132-4.

<sup>638</sup> N.D.L.R. ‘Polémique cordiale – L’Ordre Nouveau’, *Mouvements*, 9 (June 1933), 1.

<sup>639</sup> A letter from Georges Izard to Rougemont mentioned a sum of 7000 to 8000 Francs per article. See Georges Izard to Rougemont, non dated (Oct. or Nov. 1932), Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

<sup>640</sup> Robert Aron to the O.N. members, 1 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2, Correspondance, Cahier de revendications, Articles – coupures de journaux.’

<sup>641</sup> Besides Rougemont, the contributors were, by order of appearance: Henri Lefebvre, Paul Nizan, Philippe Lamour, Jean Sylveire, Thierry Maulnier, Arnaud Dandieu, Claude Chevalley, Emmanuel Mounier, Georges Izard, Alexandre Marc, René Dupuis, and Robert Aron. The ON contributors were: Dandieu, Chevalley, Marc, Dupuis, Aron, plus Rougemont.

invented for the occasion, so as to artificially boost ON presence in the ‘Cahier’.<sup>642</sup> *Esprit* was represented by Emmanuel Mounier, Georges Izard and Jean Sylveire. Thierry Maulnier was the only right-wing writer. Strangely enough, Maulnier was introduced as a member of the group *Réaction* (launched by Jean de Fabrègues in 1930, whose journal had been interrupted in July 1932), whereas he actually belonged to the team of the *Revue française* around Jean-Pierre Maxence.<sup>643</sup> Did Rougemont try to undermine the appeal of the extreme-right in 1932?<sup>644</sup> In his presentation of Maulnier, Rougemont drew a parallel – which was ‘curieux’ indeed – between Nizan and Maulnier.<sup>645</sup> This strange parallel justifies Michel Trebitsch’s suspicion that the ‘Cahier’ had been ordered ‘comme si les “extrêmes” de gauche et de droite étaient, sinon des otages, du moins des cautions à ce bel œcuménisme’.<sup>646</sup> The common cause presented by Rougemont served ON purposes well.

From 1931, ON developed a ‘common front’ strategy, defined by a triple negation: rejection of the parliamentary system, rejection of political theories based on class-struggle, and rejection of nationalism.<sup>647</sup> The context, both in France and in Europe, favoured the formation of a common front. International cooperation seemed necessary to face the increasing hostility of Germany, linked to the dramatic increase of the NSDAP, and the incipient Great Depression (which spared France until the end of 1931). The French political scene showed the discredit of traditional political forces: the Socialist Party was split by the debates that would lead to the exclusion of the ‘Neos’ in the Autumn of 1933;<sup>648</sup> the Radical

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<sup>642</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 356.

<sup>643</sup> The *Revue française*, founded in 1905 by Antoine Rédiér and run by Maxence since 1930, represented a relatively large audience (up to 7000 subscribers). On the *Revue française*, Jean-Pierre Maxence, Robert Brasillach and Thierry Maulnier, see Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 137-73.

<sup>644</sup> In 1932, Maulnier had published a collection of articles claiming that *La crise est dans l’homme*, which had been unanimously praised in the extreme-right press as well as in *NRF*. Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 211-13.

<sup>645</sup> In Rougemont’s words: ‘Il est curieux de noter la rencontre, dans leur critique du désordre régnant, d’un écrivain communiste, Nizan, et d’un écrivain « d’extrême droite », Maulnier (collaborateur de *l’Action française* et de *Réactions*).’, in ‘Cahier de revendications’, *NRF*, 231 (Dec. 1932), 817.

<sup>646</sup> Trebitsch, ‘Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le “Cahier de revendications” de décembre 1932’, 212.

<sup>647</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>648</sup> In November 1933, the group of the Neo-socialists (including Marcel Déat, Renaudel and Marquet), which was influenced by the planism of Henri de Man, was expelled from the Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) and created the Parti Socialiste Français (PSF).

Party was similarly losing its young militants; and the right-wing was overwhelmed by the progression of the leagues (the Action Française, but also new leagues such as Solidarité Française, created in July 1933).<sup>649</sup> The discrediting of political parties and the (apparent) demise of capitalism seemed to justify the search for an alternative.

As we shall see in Chapter 5, ON political project was a European federation based not on nation-states but on regions (defined roughly by the sentimental attachment to the native landscape).<sup>650</sup> *Esprit* copied ON with respect to political theory and personalism. It is worth noting an explicit statement that *Esprit's* source of inspiration was ON in 1932: Rougemont remarked, in his introduction to Georges Izard's article, that the distinction between 'petite patrie' and 'nation culturelle' was 'le principe du régionalisme que le groupe *Esprit* (*reprenant le vocabulaire de L'Ordre Nouveau*) utilise comme base d'action.'<sup>651</sup> Both ON and *Esprit*, defined the region as the appropriate scale for political action. The region (or 'la petite patrie') was said to be natural, as opposed to the artificial construct of states. A group of regions formed a broader cultural unit, 'la nation culturelle', which was necessarily open to the world. In this way, ON and *Esprit* meant to oppose nationalism and idolatry of the state.

The choice and presentation of testimonies fitted Rougemont's preference for ON, its 'common front' strategy, but also the *NRF* in 1932. It suited the *NRF* policy that Rougemont marginalized the Marxists and seemed to count the Action Française as obsolete.<sup>652</sup> The 'Cahier de revendications' followed in the line of the spiritual concerns expressed in the *NRF* since the 1920s.<sup>653</sup> Rougemont managed to make the ON 'common front' strategy fit the contents of debate at the *NRF*. This achievement shows his skills as a mediator. Let us now turn to his argument.

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<sup>649</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 152.

<sup>650</sup> See more details in Chapter 5.

<sup>651</sup> Rougemont, 'Cahier de revendications', *NRF*, 231 (Dec. 1932), 827. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>652</sup> Olivier Dard has drawn an interesting parallel between Rougemont's presentation and Gide's opposition to the extreme right. See Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 156-7. See also Gide's critique of the *Revue du siècle* in André Gide, *Journal (1898-1939)* (La Pléiade. Paris, 1948), 1178.

<sup>653</sup> The 'spiritual' quest in the *NRF*, illustrated by Marcel Arland notably, opposed both the Action Française (the 'politique d'abord' of Maurras) and the communism of the surrealists. On the 'spiritual' position of the *NRF*, see Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 127-42.

## The personalist revolution

Rougemont hoped that the ‘Cahier de revendications’ would ‘déconcerter tous ceux qui n’imaginent de choix possible qu’entre un capitalisme plus ou moins fascistisé, et le communisme (plus ou moins fordisé).’<sup>654</sup> In his conclusion, Rougemont laid down the principles that would motivate his lifelong opposition to Marxism: ‘L’opposition de Proudhon et de Marx, sur le terrain économique, traduit exactement l’opposition de Kierkegaard et de Hegel dans le domaine religieux. Elle traduira demain l’opposition des nations collectivistes et des patries personalistes.’<sup>655</sup> Reducing Hegel and Marx to a deterministic view of history, Rougemont claimed that only personalism, and not any communist revolution, could allow the human person to be free and responsible.<sup>656</sup> Following Proudhon, Rougemont argued that the couples ‘*individu-société, petite patrie-nation culturelle, initiative privée-plan*’ must co-exist in a healthy tension, and not be negated in a synthesis oppressing individual freedom.<sup>657</sup> The tension between two opposites defined the personalist third way: personalism was an attempt to find harmonious relations between the individual and the community.

In Rougemont’s eyes, the alternative was simple. One had to choose between ‘deux positions révolutionnaires malaisément comparables : l’une matérialiste, l’autre personaliste ; la première en voie de réalisation en U.R.S.S., la seconde encore mal dégagée de sa période de gestation doctrinale.’<sup>658</sup> Rougemont did not convey the multiplicity of third-way discourses, nor did he express the divergences between ON and *Esprit*, even though he knew about them.<sup>659</sup> There was a sense of emergency, in view of the political situation in

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<sup>654</sup> Rougemont, ‘A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)’, 840.

<sup>655</sup> Rougemont, ‘A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)’, 841.

<sup>656</sup> Rougemont, ‘A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)’, 841.

<sup>657</sup> Rougemont, ‘A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)’, 841n1.

<sup>658</sup> Rougemont, ‘A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)’, 840.

<sup>659</sup> He was at the heart of the split of the ON group on 13 November 1932, related to the publication of the ‘Cahier de revendications’; see also the letter of Alexandre Marc accounting for the tensions between ON and *Esprit*, Alexandre Marc to Rougemont, 12 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.



Europe: 'Ce n'est plus pour quelque « idéal » que nous avons à lutter *hic et nunc*, mais pour que les hommes vivent et demeurent des hommes.'<sup>660</sup> Thus for Rougemont, unlike other ON members, nuances of doctrine were secondary to the urgency of the revolution.

Rougemont presented personalism as spearheading the protest movement within Western democracies. He also claimed: 'L'*Ordre Nouveau, Combat, Esprit*, travaillent dans la ligne des forces révolutionnaires profondes de la France. Cette révolte de la personne, c'est la révolte jacobine, c'est la révolte de 89, dans ce qu'elle garde de valable et de dynamique ; c'est dès à présent le ressort de la nouvelle Révolution Française.'<sup>661</sup> Rougemont's praise of the French Revolution (which he had mocked in Switzerland) may be a sign of his desire for integration among revolutionaries in Paris. Alternatively, it may be an attempt to give the 'Cahier de revendications' more weight. As the French revolutionary tradition was both national(ist) and universal, so the French personalist revolution was potentially universal. Rougemont emphasised worldwide connections: 'En Allemagne, un groupe en croissance rapide, le *Gegner*, s'efforce de créer une unité révolutionnaire au-dessus des partis existants. En Angleterre (*New Europe Group* de A.R. Orage ; *New English Weekly*), en Belgique (plusieurs journaux), en Suisse (*Eveil, Présence*), en Espagne, en Hollande, en Irlande et dans les pays latins de l'Amérique, cette "troisième force" anticapitaliste et non-marxiste surgit, s'affirme.'<sup>662</sup> Rougemont also quoted an article by T.S. Eliot in *The Criterion*, 'où s'exprimaient des vues parfois proches de celles d'*Esprit* ou de *Combat*'.<sup>663</sup> The European potential of personalism was doubtless overestimated, even though ON had established some contacts with revolutionary groupings in all the countries listed by Rougemont.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 838.

<sup>661</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 843. The contradiction between the regionalism claimed by ON and the reference to the Jacobins would later lead Rougemont to condemn the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution.

<sup>662</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 840n1. It may be that Gilbert Trolliet, the editor of *Présence*, rejected personalism all the more violently in January 1933 as Rougemont had mentioned *Présence* among the movements having personalist sympathies in *NRF*. (see above Gilbert Trolliet, 'Humanisme', *Présence*, 1 (Jan. 1933).)

<sup>663</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 842.

<sup>664</sup> See Christian Roy, 'Les rapports du groupe personnaliste Ordre Nouveau avec la Hongrie et les Pays-Bas', in Olivier Dard and Etienne Deschamps, *Les relèves en Europe d'un après-guerre à l'autre. Racines, réseaux, projets et postérités* (Brussels, 2005, forthcoming).

Rougemont ended the 'Cahier' with a statement of his personal(ist) convictions: 'Ce qu'il faut pour légitimer un système d'idées en elles-mêmes justes et opportunes (comme celles, je le crois, de l'*Ordre Nouveau*, de *Combat* ou d'*Esprit*) c'est une violence spirituelle qui *existe* déjà au-delà des bouleversements nécessaires ; une substance, une exigence impossible et qui est la seule chose que les hommes éprouvent dans le fond de leur être.'<sup>66</sup> This suggested a philosophy of existence. Rougemont continued: 'Je parle de la foi chrétienne où je veux être, de ce suprême « choix » qui ne vient pas de moi, mais qui soudain *me* choisit, me saisit.'<sup>666</sup> This was undoubtedly a reference to a Christian understanding of vocation. This particular statement, as well as Rougemont's presentation of personalism in general, were unacceptable for the Marxists he had invited to contribute. The 'Cahier de revendications', which was supposed to show a certain unity of revolutionary youth, instead triggered discord.

## Revolutionary discord

A piece of personalist propaganda, it is not surprising that Rougemont's 'front unique, fût-il provisoire' provoked dissensions among the various contributors involved. In January 1933, Paul Nizan published a review in *Europe* with the intention of discrediting Rougemont's presentation of the 'Cahier' as a 'manoeuvre'.<sup>667</sup> As a communist, Nizan repudiated any solidarity with the participants to Rougemont's survey. Nizan accused Rougemont of contriving to create such a misleading impression and claimed: 'Nous ne ferons pas le front unique avec n'importe qui, nous ne conclurons pas d'accords, fussent-ils provisoires, avec nos plus authentiques ennemis.'<sup>668</sup> He mocked those who emphasised the spiritual dimension of existence: 'Il y a l'Esprit, le Saint-Esprit, qu'ils désignent avec pudeur par périphrase, il y a l'Être, les Notions Spirituelles, l'Ame, la Possession de toute la Vie, la Contemplation, l'Intelligence-Épée : une flotte d'Idées s'avance, toutes voiles dehors, une

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<sup>665</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 845. The emphasis is Rougemont's.

<sup>666</sup> Rougemont, 'A prendre ou à tuer (Cahier de revendications)', 845.

<sup>667</sup> In the name of the Association des Écrivains Révolutionnaires, Nizan wrote: 'Nous répudions premièrement toute solidarité avec les autres participants de l'enquête : la manœuvre est trop claire', Paul Nizan, 'Sur un certain front unique', *Europe*, 109 (15 Jan. 1933), 137.

<sup>668</sup> Nizan, 'Sur un certain front unique', 137-8.

flotte de majuscules.<sup>669</sup> For Nizan, personalism was either a crypto-Christian movement or a form of philosophical idealism.

In January 1933, the spiritual third way of ON and *Esprit* remained imprecise. This paved the way for insinuations that the spiritual revolution may be the forerunner of fascist ideas in France.<sup>670</sup> Nizan quoted Jean Guéhenno, the editor of *Europe*, who, in August 1932, warned that spiritual third-way groupings may form a future ‘mouvement national socialiste français’.<sup>671</sup> Nizan suggested that since National Socialism had developed in relation to phenomenology in Germany, from Kierkegaard through Heidegger to the ‘doctrine fasciste’, a similar phenomenon might be under way in France, with the introduction of Kierkegaard by Jean Wahl and Rougemont.<sup>672</sup> Slipping from an unquestionable point (the opposition of Kierkegaard to Hegel and by extension to Marxism) to the cheap discrediting of a doctrine (assimilating Kierkegaard with the first lineaments of a fascist doctrine) was a common feature of the fascist/anti-fascist debate.

Paradoxically, Rougemont proved more offended by the accusation of ‘manœuvre’ (which was not ungrounded) than by the charge of fascism (which was wrong, as we shall see in Chapter 6).<sup>673</sup> To Rougemont, it was banal that a communist should call him fascist: ‘Je ne répondrai pas ici à votre accusation de fascisme, je sais trop bien que, sous la plume d’un stalinien de Paris, elle exprime le désir de déconsidérer à peu de frais l’adversaire, plutôt que de porter un jugement objectif sur ses doctrines.’<sup>674</sup> Seeking to justify his editorial role, Rougemont explained that Nizan had contributed in full awareness of the other

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<sup>669</sup> Nizan, 'Sur un certain front unique', 138.

<sup>670</sup> Nizan, 'Sur un certain front unique', 140.

<sup>671</sup> Guéhenno was criticizing the bulletin *Mouvements* as well as the last books of Daniel-Rops and Thierry Maulnier. Jean Guéhenno, 'Contre révolution', *Europe*, 116 (15 Aug. 1932).

<sup>672</sup> Nizan, 'Sur un certain front unique', 141-2., In recent years, Zeev Sternhell and John Hellman have assimilated personalist philosophy to a ‘proto-fascism’ on the basis of similar confusions. See Chapter 6.

<sup>673</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Correspondance, Sur un certain front unique', *Europe*, 110 (15 Feb. 1933), 303-4.

<sup>674</sup> Rougemont, 'Correspondance, Sur un certain front unique', 304.

participants.<sup>675</sup> A letter from Rougemont to Paulhan confirms this, and Nizan did not deny it.<sup>676</sup>

From the literary point of view, Rougemont and Nizan were relatively close. Rougemont had felt sympathy for Nizan's *Aden Arabie*<sup>677</sup> and *Les Chiens de garde*.<sup>678</sup> Both Nizan and Rougemont argued for the necessity of uniting thought and action. They were among the first to use the military concept of *engagement* for literature.<sup>679</sup> However, it was clear in 1933, that their political choices drove a wedge between them. In June 1933, Rougemont mocked Nizan (and Gide when he became a Communist) in 'La légion étrangère soviétique' – 'Elle est formée d'intellectuels français.'<sup>680</sup> Rougemont felt that: 'L'adhésion au soviétisme d'un certain nombre d'« hommes de pensée » résulte [...] d'une psychose de démission. [...] A [l'] engagement personnel, nos révoltés préfèrent l'engagement dans un parti.'<sup>681</sup> More than fifty years later, Rougemont was still offended by Nizan's partisan attitude.<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> Rougemont wrote to Nizan: 'la composition et l'esprit du *Cahier de Revendications* vous furent exposés par moi le jour même ou nous convînmes de votre collaboration.', published in Rougemont, 'Correspondance, Sur un certain front unique', 303. Fifty years later, Rougemont replied to a lecture by John Hellman accusing the personalists of proto-fascism, giving a surprisingly detailed account of the event: 'Un seul, Paul Nizan, invité en tant que représentant de l'AEAR, insista pour obtenir les garanties nécessaires à sa collaboration. Il vint chez moi, rue Saint-Placide, dans l'appartement que me louait Georges Izard et, sitôt entré, me demanda la liste exacte des auteurs sollicités. Il sortit son agenda et j'allais lui donner les noms quand il y eût à l'instant précis une panne d'électricité. Il nous fallut sortir sur le balcon, seul éclairé par un réverbère proche, et, là, je dictai les douze noms. Je vois encore Nizan, qui louchait fortement, écrire sur son petit carnet qu'il tenait de côté, comme cela, à gauche, les douze noms, suivis de l'indication du groupe ou de la tendance dont chacun se réclamait. Cette scène se passe aux tout derniers jours d'octobre 1932, il y a donc très exactement cinquante ans. Une semaine après cette visite, Nizan m'écrivit qu'il avait remis son papier à Paulhan, et qu'il allait nous envoyer des « propositions de lutte commune sur des objectifs précis ». The letter mentioned is not in Rougemont's archives. Denis de Rougemont, 'Témoignage', *Le personnalisme d'Emmanuel Mounier, hier et demain - pour un cinquantenaire* (Paris, 1985), 132.

<sup>676</sup> Rougemont to Jean Paulhan, 1 Feb. 1933, Archives Jean Paulhan, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 220.

<sup>677</sup> See his favourable book review Denis de Rougemont, 'Sécularisme', *Foi et Vie*, 25 (March 1931).

<sup>678</sup> His 1932 article on 'Les petits purs' in *Plans* echoed *Les Chiens de garde* (1932). Rougemont emphasised: 'n'abusons pas des vérités premières, encore que la pensée contemporaine, comme l'a fort bien montré Nizan, les tiennes en particulière méfiance', in Rougemont, 'Les "petits purs"', 7.

<sup>679</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>680</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Légion étrangère soviétique', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 2 (June 1933), 19.

<sup>681</sup> Rougemont, 'Légion étrangère soviétique', 19-20.

<sup>682</sup> 'Le mensonge était énorme, total, totalitaire. Et je me suis vu contraint de mesurer, ce jour-là, pour la première fois si durement, le degré d'abaissement moral auquel la discipline partisane, totalitaire, peut réduire un esprit honnête, pour lequel j'étais prêt à ressentir tout autre chose qu'une sympathie politique : une amitié humaine directe et spontanée.' Rougemont, 'Témoignage', 133.

Like Nizan, Philippe Lamour insisted that he was not aware that his contribution to the ‘Cahier de revendications’ would be placed within a ‘front commun’ between the Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires and ‘ce spiritualisme aussi vague qu’abstrait’ that Mounier embodied.<sup>683</sup> Before the publication of the ‘Cahier’, he had admitted to Rougemont: ‘je me suis engueulé avec Alexandre [Marc]’.<sup>684</sup> In 1933, he chose communism and rejected personalism.<sup>685</sup> In his objection to personalism, ‘cette nouvelle école spiritualiste qui se proclame *bizarrement* révolutionnaire et antimarxiste’, the adverb emphasised the originality of the personalist position in 1930s France: at once anti-Marxist and revolutionary.<sup>686</sup>

## Anti-Marxist revolutionaries

Following the publication of the ‘Cahier de revendications’, Jean Paulhan wrote to Denis de Rougemont : ‘Il se dégage des nouvelles lettres que je reçois à peu près la réaction suivante : « Ce que dit Denis de Rougemont est très bien mais cela pourrait sembler dans un an tout à fait ridicule. Qu’est-il disposé à faire *dès maintenant* ? »’<sup>687</sup> The opportunity and feasibility of the personalist revolution had to be proved rapidly. Rougemont’s plan was to

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<sup>683</sup> Lamour declared having been ‘assez surpris – comme certains de nos amis l’ont sans doute également été – de [se] voir associé bon gré mal gré, dans une espèce de front unique, non seulement à des membres de l’Association des Ecrivains révolutionnaires, mais aussi à toute une série de jeunes essayistes qui vont de l’Ordre Nouveau à l’Action Française en passant par ce spiritualisme aussi vague qu’abstrait, dans le jargon, pour moi fermé, duquel on cherche en vain à discerner une direction sans équivoque et qui paraît trouver son expression dans la nouvelle revue *Esprit*.’ Lamour, ‘Pour dissiper une équivoque’, 15.

<sup>684</sup> Lamour to Rougemont, 5 Nov. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

<sup>685</sup> ‘Je tiens donc à me désolidariser nettement d’une initiative prise en dehors de moi et sans mon avis, initiative prématurée à l’égard de certains et dès à présent nettement impossible avec d’autres pour lesquels le désaccord est total et irrémédiable, portant non seulement sur les prémisses, mais même sur la constatation des évidences.’, in Lamour, ‘Pour dissiper une équivoque’, 15-16.

<sup>686</sup> Lamour, ‘Pour dissiper une équivoque’, 16.

<sup>687</sup> Paulhan to Rougemont, 9 Dec. 1932, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, Correspondance.

convince ‘les intellectuels’.<sup>688</sup> In particular Rougemont targeted those who saw Marxism as the only consistent revolutionary force, and yet agreed its premises were false. Personalism would become the revolutionary alternative to Marxism, provided intellectuals became interested, debated, and developed personalist ideas. Rougemont strongly believed in the power of ideas to change the world.

Reviews of the ‘Cahier de revendications’ emphasised that the personalist revolution seemed impractical, if not dangerously ambiguous.<sup>689</sup> A reviewer pointed out (rightly) that ‘au point de vue positif et constructif, ces révolutionnaires ne s’entendent sur rien d’autre que sur l’emploi du terme [révolutionnaire]’.<sup>690</sup> Rougemont admitted that the ‘Cahier de revendications’ was not constructive as such. He intended to develop plans for action in a second publication by the *NRF*.<sup>691</sup> This second episode never came to completion because Rougemont was discouraged by endless talks and disputes in revolutionary groupings.<sup>692</sup> The anti-Marxist revolution outlined in the ‘Cahier’ was amply debated in 1933, without much practical outcome.

Paul Desjardins, who hosted discussions of topical issues in the context of his ‘Union pour la vérité’ founded in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair,<sup>693</sup> and during his ‘Décades de

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<sup>688</sup> ‘Beaucoup d’intellectuels pensent aujourd’hui ceci : « La Révolution est nécessaire ; elle m’ennuie ; le marxisme est inacceptable ; pourtant lui seul est fort (il est : constitué) ; conclusion : je dis que si j’étais révolutionnaire, je serais marxiste ; et comme le marxisme est faux, je cultive mes choux. » Alors qu’il y a des groupes qui se forment, qui eux ne sont pas « faux » à la base, qui eux demandent la collaboration directe des intellectuels, qui eux sont directement gênants... pour les intellectuels.’ Rougemont to Jean Paulhan, 1 Feb. 1933, Archives Jean Paulhan, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 220-1.

<sup>689</sup> This comment summarizes the conclusions of the dozen of reviews of ‘Le Cahier de revendications, *NRF*’, in the file: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers.

<sup>690</sup> A. P., ‘“Cahier de revendications” (Décembre)’, *Politique*, 5th year, 1 (Jan. 1933), 95.

<sup>691</sup> Rougemont planned ‘un second *Cahier* qui donnera cette fois-ci des précisions d’action, au lieu de se borner à décrire les fondements idéologiques, ce qui tout de même était nécessaire.’ Rougemont to Jean Paulhan, 1 Feb. 1933, Archives Jean Paulhan, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 220.

<sup>692</sup> He wrote to Paulhan: ‘La nécessité d’une suite à l’enquête, précisant un programme et une technique constructive, me paraît évidente. Mais ce sera pour plus tard. Je suis fatigué de « discuter ». Je crains plus que tout l’inflation verbale qui nous menace tous, dans nos groupes. Il me faudrait maintenant un mois de retraite et de « pensée à contre-courant » – comme dit Du Bos.’ Rougemont frequented the salon of Charles du Bos at Versailles. Quote from Rougemont to Jean Paulhan, non dated, Archives Jean Paulhan, quoted in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 221.

<sup>693</sup> Desjardins hosted the debates at 21 rue Visconti, in his ‘étonnante maison [...] distinguée et poussiéreuse’, see Brasillach, *Notre avant-guerre*, 219.

Pontigny' each summer, organised debates on the non-Marxist revolutionary positions expounded in the 'Cahier de revendications'. On 18 February 1933, he arranged for a conference at the 'Union pour la vérité'.<sup>694</sup> Daniel-Rops was the keynote speaker. He addressed the question of 'positions révolutionnaires non-marxistes' with particular reference to Mounier, Maxence, Rougemont, Aron, and Dandieu.<sup>695</sup> An animated debate followed between Dandieu, Mounier, Georges Izard, Thierry Maulnier and André Chamson, among others.<sup>696</sup> Since the work of Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, the fact that all these non-marxist revolutionaries shared the same stage has been widely seen a proof of the common front of the 'non-conformistes des années trente'.<sup>697</sup>

Paul Desjardins had also been organising ten-day sessions at the Abbey of Pontigny, since 1905, to debate literary, philosophical, social or political issues.<sup>698</sup> Between 3-13 September 1933, the 'Décades de Pontigny' focused on 'le caractère révolutionnaire des événements actuels'. Rougemont was invited on account of his 'Cahier de revendications' and his 'initiative dans une réunion rue Visconti 21' on non-Marxist revolutionary positions.<sup>699</sup> Desjardins asked Rougemont to designate those who would be competent among his contemporaries: Alexandre Marc would thus be invited through Rougemont.<sup>700</sup> Then, as when he edited the 'Cahier de revendications' at the *NRF*, Rougemont acted as a mediator between established literary milieux and personalist groupings.

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<sup>694</sup> See references to this debate in Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, 95, 105; Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 172; Rougemont, *Journal d'une époque*, 105; Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 359.

<sup>695</sup> His conference would inspire his article for Maxence's journal: Daniel-Rops, 'Positions générales', *La Revue française*, 28th year, 4 (April 1933).

<sup>696</sup> See the description of the evening in 'Union, reunion et désunion pour la vérité' *Esprit*, 7 (April 1933), 137-40.

<sup>697</sup> Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 172.

<sup>698</sup> Prior to 1930, the 'Décades de Pontigny' were more akin to a select literary salon than to philosophical congresses. In the 1930s, they tended to focus more on political and social action, and the audience accordingly expanded to include young writers and students. See François Chaubet, *Paul Desjardins et les décades de Pontigny* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2000). Part III, Chapter 1: 'Les changements dans l'organisation et le public de Pontigny' and Chapter 2: 'Les Décades et la crise du libéralisme politique'. Rougemont had participated in the 'Décades' of 8-18 September 1932 on the theme of 'Goethe le réconciliateur'. See his paper Rougemont, 'Le silence de Goethe'.

<sup>699</sup> See Paul Desjardins to Rougemont, 4 July 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>700</sup> Paul Desjardins to Rougemont, 4 July 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence. For the invitation of Marc through Rougemont, see the note from Marc asking Rougemont to check that he is really invited, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Dossier Ordre Nouveau.

Unsurprisingly, the idea of an anti-Marxist spiritual revolution found a better echo on the right than on the left. The anti-Marxist strategy of the common front of revolutionary youth was attacked en bloc in the left-wing press (*Commune* and *Europe*).<sup>701</sup> The right-wing might have welcomed it as an anti-Marxist device, had it not been for the idea of revolution. Robert Garric, in *La Revue des jeunes*, thought there was no need for a ‘révolution spirituelle’.<sup>702</sup> The youth was overreacting: ‘On n’envoie un tel S.O.S. au monde que si tout semble actuellement déshonoré et perdu.’<sup>703</sup> It is interesting to quote Rougemont’s reaction (in the margins of Garric’s text) because it shows the sense of the emergency he felt: ‘précisément, ce qui se passe prépare une catastrophe. Nous n’attendrons pas que tout croule pour lancer un S.O.S. ridicule, au moment où il ne restera plus qu’à prier.’<sup>704</sup> It was the perception of an imminent global crisis that prompted the personalists to call for a spiritual revolution.

Some young right-wing writers shared this sense of urgency. In particular, there were two right-wing reviews, run by young writers, which promoted a non-Marxist revolutionary policy similar to Rougemont’s: the *Revue française* edited by Jean-Pierre Maxence, and the *Revue du siècle* edited by Jean de Fabrègues.<sup>705</sup> Maxence supported ON, although he voiced reservations about Rougemont’s ‘volonté d’une révolution personaliste et non-marxiste’ in

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<sup>701</sup> See Loubet del Bayle’s analysis of the following articles: Jean Guéhenno, ‘Contre-révolution’, *Europe*, (août 1932), 616 ; Paul Nizan, ‘Sur un certain front unique’, *Europe*, (janvier 1933), 139 ; G. Servèze, ‘Note sur *Esprit*’, *Commune*, 1 (juillet 1933) ; P. Nizan, ‘Les enfants de la lumière’; G. Sadoul, ‘Quelques études objectives sur le fascisme’, *Commune*, 2 (octobre 1933) ; P. Nizan, ‘Jeune Europe’, *Commune*, 3 (novembre 1933) ; P. Bartoli, ‘Crise de croissance et révolution de l’esprit’, *Commune*, 4 (décembre 1933) ; in Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 173.

<sup>702</sup> Robert Garric, ‘Pourquoi nous acceptions’, *Revue des jeunes* (15 Feb. 1933), 169. Garric’s assessment was based on Daniel-Rops, *Les Années tournantes*.

<sup>703</sup> Garric, ‘Pourquoi nous acceptions’, 171.

<sup>704</sup> Garric, ‘Pourquoi nous acceptions’, 171. in Rougemont’s archives, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘La NRF, Cahier de revendications, décembre 1932, 2’.

<sup>705</sup> From 1930, the editor Jean-Pierre Maxence had transformed this conservative weekly into one of the main platforms of the ‘Jeune Droite’, with Thierry Maulnier and Robert Brasillach. The *Revue française* became monthly in June 1932. It was more moderate than the extreme right press (*L’Action française*, *Gringoire*, *Candide*, and *Je suis partout*). See Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 197-204.



January 1933.<sup>706</sup> He refused to associate the *Revue française* with Marxists and with *Esprit*.<sup>7</sup> In April 1933, the *Revue française* published a special issue combining the testimonies of ‘Jeune Droite’ writers (Jean-Pierre Maxence, Robert Francis, Maurice Blanchot, Jean de Fabrègues, and Thierry Maulnier) and ON members (Daniel-Rops, Robert Aron, Arnaud Dandieu, René Dupuis, Jean Jardin, and Alexandre Marc).<sup>708</sup>

Thierry Maulnier proved particularly close to Rougemont. He rejected at once ‘national-socialisme’, ‘fascisme’, and ‘le collectivisme russe’, with a severity unparalleled on the right at this time.<sup>709</sup> Although Maulnier was not Nietzschean (he remained, after all, a disciple of Maurras), he drew on Nietzsche to justify his contempt for the state and for the ‘règne des masses’.<sup>710</sup> To that extent, ON shared Maulnier’s idea of a ‘révolution aristocratique’,<sup>711</sup> and in October 1933, Maulnier was invited to participate to the review *L’Ordre Nouveau*.<sup>712</sup> Thus Maulnier was very close to ON, and as Chapter 3 has argued, Fabrègues was a right-wing personalist. They were the two right-wing writers with whom the ON common front was possible.

To conclude on the episode of the ‘Cahier de revendications’: Rougemont did not succeed in initiating the broad debate he had in mind. Nevertheless, the ‘Cahier de

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<sup>706</sup> Jean-Pierre Maxence, ‘Révolutionnaires?’ *La Revue française* (Jan. 1933).

<sup>707</sup> Maxence, ‘Révolutionnaires?’

<sup>708</sup> Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 219-20.

<sup>709</sup> There has been so many misunderstandings of Maulnier’s contempt for democracy that it is worth quoting in length: ‘Mythe de la cité socialiste, mythe de l’imperium fasciste, mythe de la germanité, les buts proposés à l’action la plus énergétique et au dévouement absolu des hommes européens consistent, somme toute, dans l’organisation de la vie collective ; on ne propose rien à l’homme qu’une certaine forme de société comme seul objet de son action et comme seul espoir possible d’une vie supérieure : rien au delà. L’idée de l’homme disparaît comme valeur éternelle et irréductible. [...] Dans le national-socialisme et dans le fascisme, tout autant que dans le collectivisme russe, c’est le bien-être ou les cultes de la masse qui réclament à leur bénéfice les démarches suprêmes de la sainteté, de l’héroïsme et de la méditation. La cité socialiste, la race, l’Etat, redoutables idoles apprêtées pour les communions collectives [...] sont ainsi érigées en cultes absolus [...]. Ces nouvelles disciplines exigent le dévouement total de la foi et de l’action à des notions abstraites, vides, grossières, privées de tout contenu éthique et spirituel.’ Thierry Maulnier, ‘La révolution aristocratique’, *Revue française* (Apr. 1933), quoted by Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 209.

<sup>710</sup> Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française*, 211.

<sup>711</sup> Balmand, ‘Intellectuel(s) dans l’*Ordre Nouveau* (1933-1938): une aristocratie de prophètes’, 171-84.

<sup>712</sup> Thierry Maulnier, ‘Pourquoi ils sont Conservateurs’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 1, 4 (Oct. 1933), 2-3.

revendications' acquired a mythical status for the 'non-conformistes des années trente'.<sup>713</sup> But the common front remained largely inconsistent.<sup>714</sup> Besides common slogans, there was no agreement as to the practical course of action. The episode of the 'Cahier de revendication' illustrates the polysemic nature of political discourse – in this case of a spiritual revolution. The following section seeks to clarify the notion of spiritual revolution and the personalist call for action.

## **2. The personalist call for action (1934-1936)**

The need to overcome the separation of thought and action was a popular slogan in 1930s literature. Philosophically speaking, this slogan is empty, if thought is understood as an act of its own kind. But the point was political and literary: it was a call for *engagement*. In the French literary field, the need to 'overcome the separation of thought and action' was diametrically opposed to the 'art for art's sake' motto of many writers born in the nineteenth century.<sup>715</sup> In that sense, it was a clash of generations. As we have seen, Paul Nizan and Denis de Rougemont, born in 1905 and 1906 respectively, were among the first to develop a theory of *engagement* in France. Among the personalists, Rougemont was the most convincing advocate of *littérature engagée*. He drew his inspiration partly from the French literary field (in which he opposed 'escapist' intellectuals), partly from his Christian understanding of incarnation (the Word made flesh).

Paradoxically, the very repetition of the personalist discourse on the need to link thought with action manifested their failure to instigate a revolution. Had revolutionary action been taken, there would have been no need to constantly underline the interconnections of doctrine and action. On the basis of unpublished material, I emphasise the gap between the personalists' militant publications and their sense of political impotence.

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<sup>713</sup> Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*, 174.

<sup>714</sup> See also the recent analysis of Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 151-67, 204-6.

<sup>715</sup> See Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, 191-288, 465-509.

## Revolutionary tactics

Rougemont explained in January 1934 (in the special ‘Ordre Nouveau’ issue of the Belgian journal *L’Avant-Poste*) that personalism was meant to be immediately relevant, without the need for political parties to interpret it: ‘Ce que nous combattons de toute notre violence, c’est la fameuse séparation de la doctrine et de l’action – fondement de l’esprit bourgeois sur le plan éthique et culturel, fondement sur le plan politique des partis, considérés comme les organes indispensables de toute “réalisation pratique”.’<sup>716</sup> Personalism was to be viable without delay. Its revolution was twofold: primarily a revolution within consciences, it was also to be a political revolution. There was to be no distinction between private and public revolution.

In reality however, it was increasingly clear, to ON members as to contemporary observers, that the political revolution would not happen immediately. This undermined the entire edifice of revolutionary personalism. Rougemont held two different discourses, depending on whether he was speaking publicly or privately. In his published works, Rougemont emphasised the primacy of the revolution within the conscience, and undermined the importance of the social revolutionary movement: ‘*Mieux vaut un convaincu sans influence sociale, que mille sympathisants prisonniers du désordre établi. (Car cet homme convaincu sera l’impondérable dont dépendra la décision)*’.<sup>717</sup> In his private correspondence however, Rougemont proved concerned with the lack of social and political influence of ON.

In the summer of 1934, Rougemont wrote to Robert Aron and to the ON group deploring the fact that their doctrine was abstract and would never be realised if action was not taken immediately.<sup>718</sup> Rougemont suggested that ON unite with other similar movements, following the ‘common front’ strategy of 1932. Alexandre Marc responded by refusing

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<sup>716</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Ni droite ni gauche’, *L’Avant-poste*, V, 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1934), 14.

<sup>717</sup> The emphasis is his own. (c1934) Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 188.

<sup>718</sup> Rougemont’s letters have not been found, but Marc explicitly answers to Rougemont’s objections in two letters (one to Robert Aron and one to ON), in Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

alliances (which he saw as compromising) with other movements: ‘Je crois que l’O.N. se trouve évidemment dans une situation délicate du fait que ce qu’on appelle sa « doctrine » a devancé ce qu’on appelle l’« action ». [...] Nous contenter de q[uel]q[ue]s mots d’ordre vagues p[ou]r faire de l’agitation : mais le Front Commun, les Croix de Feu, La [Flèche], La Revue du Siècle, *Esprit*, etc... suffisent à cette tâche. Alors ? Non, je crois que nous devons continuer notre travail constructif avec une rigueur toujours accrue.’<sup>719</sup> ON had the particular role of deepening the personalist political philosophy. Marc was right to point out that its doctrinal emphasis was unparalleled by any other third-way movement in France.

An ON league had been created, but it had little practical result beyond publishing yet another paper. The ‘Ligue d’Action pour un ordre nouveau’ – ‘un mouvement d’action qui se propose de répandre les thèmes de *L’Ordre Nouveau*’ – was led by Pierre Hazebroucq, and published a bi-monthly periodical *Nous Voulons* from 14 April 1934.<sup>720</sup> Marc reckoned: ‘La Ligue d’Action ne f... rien. Le Club est un peu plus actif, m[ai]s il tâtonne.’<sup>721</sup> Rougemont had suggested propaganda leaflets to boost ON social support. Marc backed the idea: ‘Ton idée de préparer des tracts est excellente. Nous t’envoyons notre bénédiction & attendons son projet élaboré...’<sup>722</sup> This is a good reason to think that Rougemont was instrumental in issuing the leaflets ‘POUR UN ORDRE NOUVEAU POUR UNE FRANCE LIBRE’ calling for ‘une ACTION IMMEDIATE’ and the creation of a ‘Centre de propagande’ in 1937.<sup>723</sup> Between 1934 and 1937 however, ON continued to develop its revolutionary theory, without taking overt political action.

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<sup>719</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>720</sup> *L’Ordre Nouveau*, advertisement on the first page and on the inside back cover of issue 9 (Mars 1934).

<sup>721</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>722</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>723</sup> See three large sheets: ‘Pour un Ordre Nouveau Pour une France libre’, ‘L’Action de l’Ordre Nouveau’ [date: 1937, just after the creation of a Centre d’Action], ‘Que veut l’Ordre Nouveau?’, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’. It is difficult for the historian to identify the author of ON propaganda leaflets, as the team work method suggests they were collective endeavours.

For all his privately expressed doubts, Rougemont proved a faithful activist in his *Politique de la personne* (1934). He reasserted the ON theory that the most consistent and radical doctrine would win in the end: ‘c’est au groupement le plus ferme en doctrine, si petit qu’il soit, que revient la décision finale.’<sup>724</sup> Hence the importance of doctrinal research: ‘La force véritable d’un groupe numériquement restreint réside tout entière dans sa *bonne conscience doctrinale*, c’est-à-dire dans la cohésion, la lucidité et l’intransigeance de ses constructions, de ses buts.’<sup>725</sup> As Alexandre Marc had made clear, the ON was not to compromise with other revolutionary groupings.

The revolutionary character of ON sometimes plunged into empty lyricism. The main ON doctrinal book, *La Révolution nécessaire* (1933), ended with the following lines: ‘Le long des côtes de la Méditerranée et de la mer du Nord, remontant le Danube ou le Rhin, s’avance l’antique ennemi de l’homme. On l’appellera Etat, matérialisme, racisme ou tyrannie [...]. Il ne s’agit pas de défendre une cité ou une idée. Il ne s’agit pas de défense. Mais de choix, d’affirmation, de création, de Révolution. Nous sommes sur la terre décisive. L’heure est venue. Allons-y.’<sup>726</sup> This martial tone was counterproductive. In 1934, Roger Martin du Gard wrote to André Gide that he was wary of the ON: ‘Leur doctrinarisme abstrait, leur suffisance, m’irritent depuis des mois,’ in spite of unmistakable qualities, such as ‘une indiscutable élévation de pensée et [...] pureté d’intentions.’<sup>727</sup> In a 1934 review of *La Révolution nécessaire*, which remained unpublished until the 1980s, Simone Weil deplored ‘un certain ton de prophète, un style pédant et prétentieux, au reste inévitable quand on se croit tout spécialement désigné pour sauver l’humanité, comme c’est le cas des auteurs ; par malheur, un pareil ton est tout à fait incompatible avec une véritable probité intellectuelle dans l’analyse.’<sup>728</sup> The ON’s revolutionary and peremptory manner proved a hindrance to its success among intellectuals.

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<sup>724</sup> (c1934) Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 185.

<sup>725</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 186.

<sup>726</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 276-7.

<sup>727</sup> Letter of 2 June 1934, Nice, in André Gide and Roger Martin du Gard, *Correspondance, I. 1913-1934* (vol. 1. Paris, 1968), 617.

<sup>728</sup> Simone Weil, '(Le Groupement de l"Ordre Nouveau", Projet d'article inédit, début 1934)', in André Devaux and Florence de Lussy (eds), *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1988), 324.

As Olivier Dard has remarked recently, the emphasis that the revolution was necessary, vital and urgent in *La Révolution nécessaire*, contrasted with the lack of clues as to how to conduct it.<sup>729</sup> The revolution was a neither-nor policy: ‘Ni communisme, ni capitalisme’; ‘ni droite, ni gauche’; ‘ni libéralisme, ni fascisme’.<sup>730</sup> One of the ways in which a spiritual revolution could have been understood was within a Christian tradition. The prominent literary critic Ramon Fernandez wrote: ‘leur *personnalité* n’a de sens que si on l’éclaire par l’idée chrétienne de l’âme. Si nous avons une âme, la révolution spirituelle se comprend et s’impose ; sinon ce n’est qu’un mythe.’<sup>731</sup> However the ON refused a plain Christian interpretation of the term. Rougemont tried to disarm Fernandez in his own review of *La Révolution nécessaire*; only to reinforce it when he explained: ‘Une personne peut être définie comme le *prochain* de l’Evangile.’<sup>732</sup> Caught between his personal beliefs and the non-confessional line at the ON, Rougemont was not the most convincing advocate for a non-Christian personalism. He tried to promote the ON revolution nonetheless.

In January 1935, Rougemont published an article on revolutionary tactics, which was meant to appease qualms about the lack of political influence at ON.<sup>733</sup> The article reasserted the prospect of an ON revolution, by comparing ON to the Bolsheviks at the turn of the century. Like ON, they were a small *avant-garde* group, focusing on revolutionary theory, refusing to compromise with other political movements, and aiming at all classes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>729</sup> In his preface for the 1993 reedition, Nicolas Tenzer stated that, paradoxically, the freshness of the book lay ‘dans son imprécision et dans son refus de donner les clefs que paraissent fournir les textes révolutionnaires habituels.’ Nicolas Tenzer, Préface, Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, vi.; See Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 164.

<sup>730</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 269.

<sup>731</sup> Ramon Fernandez, ‘La révolution est-elle nécessaire?’ *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 244 (Jan. 1934), 114.

<sup>732</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘La révolution nécessaire par Robert Aron et Arnaud Dandieu’, *Les Cahiers du sud*, 162 (Jun. 1934), 390. The issue 5 of Rougemont’s protestant journal *Hic et Nunc* explained that the neighbour, in the sense of the Good Samaritan, was he who *acted* with charity, not the neighbour as such.

<sup>733</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 17 (Jan. 1935), 9-12.

<sup>734</sup> Rougemont, ‘Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine’.

Rougemont based his allegations on Lenin's *What is to be done?* (1902).<sup>735</sup> To the objection that 'cette tactique léniniste a conduit 160 millions d'hommes à l'esclavage du travail étatique', Rougemont answered that 'les méthodes de Lénine ont été manifestement trahies par le fascisme stalinien'.<sup>736</sup> It was up to ON to carry out the true revolution: 'nos fondements spirituels, personalistes, nous permettront, nous obligeront même à corriger les déviations que son mépris de l'homme concret devait imprimer à la tactique de Lénine'.<sup>737</sup> The personalist revolution had to be accomplished first in the attitude, in the way of living of the ON members, who would increasingly come to form 'une communauté de personnes qui ont fait la révolution dans leur vie, qui souffrent à cause de cela du désordre établi', and subsequently pushed to change the institutions.<sup>738</sup> Political and economic changes were seen as secondary both in time and in importance.

## Thinking in acts

In October 1936, the leader of the French Communist Party, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, published a pamphlet *Au service de l'Esprit*, in which he wrote that 'au dessus-de tout, les communistes placent l'homme', against fascists, defined as the worse enemies of 'la personne humaine, cette grande force spirituelle'.<sup>739</sup> Rougemont remarked that it was a sign of the success of personalism that the Communist Party should use their slogans: 'primauté du spirituel ; primauté de l'homme sur l'économique ; affirmation de la personne comme valeur spirituelle absolue, par suite rejet du capitalisme et du fascisme, liberté nécessaire de la culture ; enfin, subordination du machinisme, perfectionné, aux besoins humains'.<sup>740</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Lenin's booklet had already been quoted by ON in the 'realist' journal *La revue des vivants* in 1933, when the group tried to justify its focus on the doctrine of the revolution and its rejection of political reformism. Arnaud Dandieu, Denis de Rougemont, Daniel-Rops, Robert Aron, Alexandre Marc, René Dupuis, Jean Jardin, and Claude Chevalley, 'Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau', *La Revue des vivants*, 12 (Dec. 1933), 1826.

<sup>736</sup> Rougemont, 'Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine', 11.

<sup>737</sup> Rougemont, 'Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine', 12.

<sup>738</sup> Rougemont, 'Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine', 12.

<sup>739</sup> Quoted by Rougemont in Denis de Rougemont, 'De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine: Manifeste au service du personalisme par Emmanuel Mounier', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 281 (Feb. 1937), 296.

<sup>740</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'La pensée engagée. Gagée et rengagée. Paul Vaillant-Couturier: Au service de l'Esprit', *Esprit*, 53 (Feb. 1934), 812. see also Rougemont, 'De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine: Manifeste au service du personalisme par Emmanuel Mounier', 296.

The broad success of personalist slogans made a strict definition of words all the more urgent, as a starting point for intellectual integrity in politics.<sup>741</sup> Rougemont noted bitterly that the pamphlet of the French Communist Party ‘ne touche pas un traître-mot (sans calembour) des problèmes que pose le marxisme : étatismes, dictature, déterminisme économique et pas un mot de l’oppression stalinienne.’<sup>742</sup> The way in which political parties corrupted the daily language was a chief concern for Rougemont. He agreed with Simone Weil (with whom he would work at the *Nouveaux Cahiers* in 1937-8) that clarifying concepts was a weapon against ‘totalitarian’ ideological escalation.<sup>743</sup> To clarify the use of words was one of the chief aims of Rougemont’s essay *Penser avec les mains* (1936), in order to fight against ‘totalitarian’ propaganda.<sup>744</sup>

One may refer to Ackermann’s biography for the conception and reception of this essay.<sup>745</sup> Ackermann’s presentation is clear and thorough, there is no need to repeat it here. As he noted, to think in acts (‘penser en actes’) was a central theme in Rougemont’s writings since 1932.<sup>746</sup> Rougemont worked on *Penser avec les mains* between 1932 and 1936. The distinctive feature of *Penser avec les mains* was to set forth the need for every society to be oriented by a ‘commune mesure’, a common set of principles towards a shared objective. The conviction that a properly functioning society depends on a common culture was a widespread contention in interwar France.<sup>747</sup> One must say a word about Rougemont’s conception of culture in the context of 1930s Europe.

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<sup>741</sup> Rougemont, 'De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine: Manifeste au service du personnalisme par Emmanuel Mounier', 296.

<sup>742</sup> Rougemont, 'La pensée engagée. Gagée et rengagée. Paul Vaillant-Couturier: Au service de l'Esprit', 813.

<sup>743</sup> 'De nos jours, tout ce qui est entaché de confusion et d'obscurité est destiné à être entraîné, par la force des choses, dans le sens de l'oppression nouvelle, celle de l'Etat totalitaire.' Quoted in Weil, '(Le Groupement de l'Ordre Nouveau', Projet d'article inédit, début 1934)', 328.

<sup>744</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*.

<sup>745</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 497-522.

<sup>746</sup> Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', 37-41. See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 497.

<sup>747</sup> See Passmore, 'The construction of crisis in interwar France', esp. 164.



While Rougemont proposed the ‘commune mesure’ as a tool to evaluate the strength of any given civilisation with respect to its ultimate (metaphysical) ends, his targets were specific. He perceived the decadence of Western civilisation in that ‘la *propagande* et la *publicité* [...] ne nous ordonnent qu’à des fins provisoires ou dégradantes : l’état totalitaire, et la richesse matérielle’.<sup>748</sup> Besides familiar references to religion as an organising force in biblical Israel and in the Middle Ages, Rougemont gave two examples of ‘communes mesures’ in the 1930s: the Plan in the Soviet Russia, to which all human activities were artificially subordinated;<sup>749</sup> and the Nation in Nazi Germany, embodied by the Party, itself incarnate in the Führer.<sup>750</sup> Rougemont was adamant that the Soviet and the Nazi regimes were bound to fail in the long run and to be harmful, because the ‘common mesures’ they sought to impose crushed concrete persons.<sup>751</sup>

The weakness of parliamentary democracies lay in their incapacity to oppose ‘totalitarian’ regimes with a ‘commune mesure’ or moral that would make the people impervious to nationalist ideologies.<sup>752</sup> To overcome this deficit, Rougemont appealed to the free and responsible person, defined as the crucial tenet of Western civilisation.<sup>753</sup> Whether or not *Penser avec les mains* was just another piece of intellectual moralism, or whether it was an action in its own right, it nonetheless remained an important attempt to restore a sense of conscience and responsibility which had been lost in Europe, together with the loss of a ‘commune mesure’.

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<sup>748</sup> Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', 75.

<sup>749</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 80-93.

<sup>750</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 94-106.

<sup>751</sup> Chapter 6 develops the reasons for Rougemont’s opposition to ‘totalitarian’ regimes.

<sup>752</sup> Rougemont wrote: ‘Le seul mot de *totalitaire* qui qualifie les deux régimes fondés par ces révolutions suffirait à prouver ma thèse [ils restaurent une mesure commune]. Quelle que soit la haine violente qui oppose un Staline et un Hitler, ils se ressemblent au moins en ceci, qui est décisif : c’est qu’ils veulent l’un et l’autre imposer à leur peuple une conception et une pratique de la vie qui obéissent à un but commun, au service duquel s’harmonisent et se confondent les énergies tant spirituelles que matérielles.’ In Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 79.

<sup>753</sup> See his Chapter ‘Eléments d’une morale de la pensée’ Rougemont, 'Penser avec les mains (fragments)', 194-245.

### **3. Towards a federation of personalist movements (1936-8)**

To make an impact on society, Rougemont was aware that the personalist movements had to stand united. After 1934, he was relatively isolated in his endeavours to federate the various personalist groups. Other ON mediators, such as Alexandre Marc and Jean Jardin, had given up the idea of a common front of personalists. Marc, who had initiated French personalism directly or indirectly, was estranged from *Esprit* after 1934. Jardin gradually became detached from ON after Dandieu's death. His subsequent political trajectory has been interpreted as a fidelity to certain personalities, rather than to personalist ideas.<sup>754</sup> Although he had been active in liaising ON with the Jeune Droite until 1934, little came of it.<sup>755</sup> Thereafter, Jardin's traditionalist and elitist political views inclined him more and more towards the right.<sup>756</sup> Rougemont, by contrast, intensified his efforts to federate personalism(s). From 1936 onwards, he insisted on a simple alternative for the personalist movement(s): federation or failure.

#### **Rapprochement between ON and *Esprit***

In the summer of 1936, returning from a year in Nazi Germany, Rougemont made plans for the future of the personalist movement: his aims, according to a draft note, were to '*Radicaliser et confédérer le mouvement*'.<sup>757</sup> To confederate the personalist movement

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<sup>754</sup> Pierre Assouline, *Jean Jardin 1904-1976: Une éminence grise* (Paris, 1986), 44-5.

<sup>755</sup> Jardin played a mediating role in a special issue of Maxence's *Revue Française* (April 1933).

<sup>756</sup> If Jardin's adhesion to the revolutionary personalism of *Ordre Nouveau* seems contradictory with his zeal for tradition and Order, it is but an apparent paradox: like the Jeune Droite members, with whom he shared counter-revolutionary sympathies, he reckoned that in front of the 'désordre établi', order lay in revolution. Rougemont and Jardin held that 'l'ordre nouveau' was first and foremost a negative statement, 'une formule critique. Elle signifie la condamnation des partis, plus encore: du parti, en tant que formation d'action, sur le plan politique. D'où la condamnation, bien entendu du Parlement.' Denis de Rougemont and Jean Jardin, 'Ni droite ni gauche', *L'Avant-poste*, V, 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1934), 12. Robert Aron would write: 'C'est ainsi que, sans jamais les désavouer ni les passer sous silence, Jean Jardin a promené les idées de l'*Ordre Nouveau*, du cabinet de Raoul Dautry, directeur de la S.N.C.F. et grand adversaire de l'Etat français à celui [...] du président du Conseil le plus contesté de l'histoire de France, le Pierre Laval de Vichy', in Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, 104.

<sup>757</sup> The date of the letter on the back of which Rougemont drafted his plans, and his reference to the September Congress of *Esprit*, which took place at the youth hostel of Plessis-Robinson in last week-end of September 1936, allow to date this document of the summer of 1936. Rougemont, '*Radicaliser et confédérer le mouvement*', manuscript on the back of Robert Aron to Rougemont, 16 July 1936, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

required that ON and the *Esprit* groups change their attitude to one another. The atmosphere of the *Esprit* groups, which Rougemont and other witnesses described as friendly and cordial, contrasted with the doctrinaire and dry ‘cellules ON’. At the same time, the personalism of the *Esprit* groups seemed ill-defined. Therefore, ON and *Esprit* were complementary. Following this diagnostic, Rougemont drafted a fourfold plan:

1. Radicaliser *Esprit* aux journées de sept. [Congress of *Esprit*] et lui faire concevoir son absence de doctrine construct[ive].
2. Prendre conscience à l’O.N. de notre absence de forces numériques et d’atmosphère.
3. Obtenir d’*Esprit* l’acceptation de la doctrine O.N., et de l’O.N. l’acceptation de l’atmosphère et des groupes *Esprit*.  
Pour cela :
  - A. Ouvrage commun (Traité des [Libertés])
  - B. Cit[er] O.N. dans *Esprit*. Changement de ton. [...]
4. Confédérer tous les groupuscules anticap[italistes] et anti-Staliniens, *Bureau fédéral*.<sup>758</sup>

This unpublished document is one of the essential plans for federating anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist third-way movements on the basis of a personalist doctrine.<sup>759</sup> Rougemont’s project was discussed at the *Esprit* congress at Plessis-Robinson in September 1936. According to Michel Winock, thirty-two personalist groups attended.<sup>760</sup> Denis de Rougemont and Robert Aron were there on behalf of ON. Three out of four founding fathers of *Esprit* were present (Mounier, Louis-Emile Galey and André Déléage), as well as longstanding contributors to the journal (Pierre-Aimé Touchard and the historian Henri-Irénée Marrou) and more atypical recruits, such as the Socialist-inclined Protestant Roger Leenhardt, the former Marxist Brice Parain who had joined the team in 1935, and the young philosopher Merleau-Ponty.<sup>761</sup> Bernard Charbonneau was a delegate for Bayonne, Jacques Ellul for Bordeaux, Jean Lacroix for Dijon, Jean-Marie Soutou for Pau, Georges Lefranc and Paulette Mounier for

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<sup>758</sup> Rougemont, manuscript on the back of Robert Aron to Rougemont, 16 July 1936, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>759</sup> See also, two years later, Denis de Rougemont, ‘*Le fédéraliste* (revue). *Combat*, n°2, 1938. *La NRF* (mai), *Esprit*, 72 (1 Sept. 1938).

<sup>760</sup> This number may be overestimated. Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 173.

<sup>761</sup> For more details on these contributors to *Esprit*, see Winock, “*Esprit*”. *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 140-60, 458-9.

Brussels, and C.G. Paulding for Geneva. The project of a federation of various third-way groupings was discussed, with particular reference to ON.<sup>762</sup>

In the following months, Rougemont multiplied his endeavours towards rapprochement between the various personalists groups. In October 1936, following the publication of Mounier's *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, Rougemont made another attempt at bringing together ON and *Esprit*, in *L'Ordre Nouveau* this time. He called for an *action 'engagée'* common to the various personalists – 'après quelques années de recherches "pluralistes"'.<sup>763</sup> Rougemont did not pretend to ignore the enduring discrepancies between the doctrine of ON and that of *Esprit*. He expressed three main reservations about Mounier's personalism. Firstly, Mounier's conception of labour as an 'obligation universelle' was unacceptable.<sup>764</sup> Secondly, Rougemont thought Mounier's idea that the state should guarantee the status of the human person was absurd.<sup>765</sup> It contradicted Mounier's earlier statement that '*une personne est un être spirituel constitué comme tel par une manière de subsistance et d'indépendance dans son être*'. Thirdly, Rougemont disapproved of Mounier's use of the terms 'décentralisation' or 'région' – Mounier was not following ON definitions on these points.<sup>766</sup>

Nevertheless, Rougemont thought that these were minor differences, 'de simples inconséquences, si nous comprenons le contexte'.<sup>767</sup> What was significant was the reassertion of key ON notions by Mounier: 'les notions de minimum vital intérieur et européen, de service civil (appelé ici service public), d'entreprise (et non pas de corporation), de Conseil

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<sup>762</sup> Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 173.

<sup>763</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Manifeste au service du personalisme par E. Mounier', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 4th year, 34 (Oct. 1936), 64.

<sup>764</sup> Quoting Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, 169.

<sup>765</sup> Mounier stated: 'le rôle de l'Etat se limite d'une part à garantir le statut fondamental de la personne, de l'autre à ne point mettre d'entraves à la libre concurrence des communautés spirituelles.', in Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, 201.

Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, 63. The emphasis is Mounier's.

<sup>766</sup> See further details in Chapter 5.

<sup>767</sup> Rougemont, 'Manifeste au service du personalisme par E. Mounier', 64.

suprême enfin, et la distinction entre autorité et pouvoir'.<sup>768</sup> A somewhat patronizing Rougemont was pleased to see Mounier follow the personalism of ON; he trusted in 'des promesses d'accord aussi solides'.<sup>769</sup> Thereafter, the relations between ON and *Esprit* would be cordial – no mean achievement.

At the beginning of 1937, Rougemont, Mounier and Jean Maze (the editor of *La Flèche*, the newspaper of Bergery's movement) formed 'Clubs de presse' to debate the information available in the press. In May 1937, Mounier welcomed the new personalist weekly *A nous la liberté*: 'Nos camarades de *L'Ordre Nouveau* viennent de lancer le premier « hebdomadaire personaliste ». <sup>770</sup> In September, the *Esprit* Congress gathered 154 participants for a critical assessment: 'Où en sommes-nous de la doctrine personaliste ?'<sup>771</sup> Rougemont answered on behalf of ON. His 'MOTION PRÉSENTÉE AU MOUVEMENT PERSONNALISTE PAR *L'ORDRE NOUVEAU*' summarised the fundamental principles of personalism, according to ON and in his clear style.<sup>772</sup> To start with, Rougemont spoke of 'le mouvement personaliste' in the singular: he underplayed the divisions between ON, *Esprit*, and the local *Esprit* groups (especially the Bordeaux group). His text conveys the hope that personalists unite, in the face of international threats of war and encroachments on personal liberties. It is worth quoting at length because this text gives a concise account of Rougemont's personalism, and a clear articulation of the ON doctrine.

First of all, Rougemont reaffirmed the spiritual foundations ('*Fondements spirituels*') of the personalist movement(s). Historically, personalism had emerged to defend personal freedom, and it was a third way (or force): 'Le mouvement personaliste est né d'un refus de la Société présente, bourgeoise et capitaliste et d'un refus du dilemme « communisme ou

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<sup>768</sup> Rougemont, 'Manifeste au service du personalisme par E. Mounier'.

<sup>769</sup> Rougemont, 'Manifeste au service du personalisme par E. Mounier'.

<sup>770</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, 'Revue des Revues, *A Nous la Liberté*', *Esprit*, 56 (1 May 1937), 297.

<sup>771</sup> This was the first Congress held at Jouy-en-Josas, in a school found by Touchard which would subsequently become the regular meeting-place of the *Esprit* groups, see Winock, "*Esprit*". *Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 173-4.

<sup>772</sup> 'Motion présentée au mouvement personaliste par l'Ordre Nouveau, Congrès de Jouy-en-Josas, 1937, rédigée par D. de Rougemont', Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'. All the following quotes are from this document, without page numbers.

fascisme » qu'on lui propose pour en sortir. En face de ces deux solutions dictatoriales, le personnalisme représente une troisième force dont l'objectif capital est d'assumer la libre activité des personnes dans la société.<sup>773</sup> Rougemont's definition of the person had strong moral overtones. It emphasised the notions of vocation, responsibility and community: 'La personne, c'est l'homme qui accomplit librement sa vocation, dans la conscience des responsabilités dont elle le charge vis-à-vis de la communauté.' The person, as the individual in relation to others, was implicitly defined in reference to Christian thought and thus could be presented as the 'principe central de la civilisation occidentale'. Personalism was the adequate expression of Western civilisation, 'l'individualisme et le collectivisme ne sont que des déviations dans le sens de l'anarchie ou de la tyrannie.'<sup>774</sup> This brought Rougemont to his main political point.

Politically, the personalist movement(s) radically opposed the hegemony of the state: 'Contre l'étatisme, vice commun à tous les systèmes (capitalistes, communistes, fascistes) qui règnent aujourd'hui. L'hégémonie de l'Etat traduit une perte de sens civique et une oppression des personnes.'<sup>775</sup> From an economic and social point of view, the opposition to the capitalist system led to be 'contre les trusts, principaux instruments de l'oppression capitaliste' ; and also 'contre les sociétés anonymes et le système bancaire, fondé sur le principe – que nous rejetons – de la productivité de l'argent.' This was not to say that personalism was anywhere near socialism and communism. Opposing socialist and communist plans for nationalisation, the personalist movement was 'contre l'étatisation des grandes entreprises, des trusts, des banques et de l'enseignement. Cette opération ne pouvant que renforcer la puissance abusive de l'Etat, sans supprimer les vices inhérents aux organismes étatisés.' Rougemont was not an anarchist, however. He acknowledged that there was a need for a state: 'L'Etat ne doit pas être

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<sup>773</sup> 'Motion présentée au mouvement personnaliste par l'Ordre Nouveau, Congrès de Jouy-en-Josas, 1937, rédigée par D. de Rougemont', Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

<sup>774</sup> While it may be an anachronism to speak of Eurocentrism for the period preceding the war (on which see Chapter 7), this reproach certainly applies to the later period, when Rougemont amply developed the idea that the person was the essence of the 'Western adventure'. See esp. Denis de Rougemont, *L'Aventure occidentale de l'homme* (Paris, 1957).

<sup>775</sup> All the quotes in the next two paragraph are from: 'Motion présentée au mouvement personnaliste par l'Ordre Nouveau, Congrès de Jouy-en-Josas, 1937, rédigée par D. de Rougemont', Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

au-dessus des personnes, mais à leur service ; il doit être fort dans son domaine limité.<sup>77</sup> Thus, he insisted that the power of the state had to be limited to purely administrative functions.

The triple condemnation of the centralized state, capitalist economy, and collectivist plans was balanced by a series of '*Affirmations constructives*'. Personalists were 'pour la libération réelle des travailleurs par la suppression de la condition prolétarienne et du salariat, formes modernes de servage.' Personalists believed in the possibility and urgency of eradicating poverty. Chapter 5 will show that ON hoped that its scheme for civilian service, combined with improved mechanisation, would end the proletarian condition. Wage labour ('salariat') would be replaced by free associations of workers. Rougemont continued on the theme of international relations: 'A l'étatisme totalitaire, nous opposons le fédéralisme politique et économique, seul régime capable de sauvegarder les libertés et de prévenir les guerres totales.' In political terms, 'le fédéralisme ne peut se constituer que sur la base des communes autonomes et des communautés locales'; and political federalism had an economic counterpart: 'le fédéralisme ne peut se constituer que sur la base des entreprises autonomes, librement constituées par les producteurs associés et responsables.' Social welfare would be guaranteed by 'l'institution d'un minimum vital assuré gratuitement à tous les membres de la fédération.'<sup>777</sup> Rougemont concluded that respect for persons was the fundamental axiom. This ideal description of the personalist society contrasted with the scant success it had translating into reality.

## Failure of the personalist revolution

By 1937, the personalists of ON had no illusions as to the failure of the revolution they had been planning for years. Alexandre Marc was fully aware that 'la carence des non-conformistes' was to stand divided, and therefore the only alternative for them was 'l'union

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<sup>776</sup> 'Motion présentée au mouvement personaliste par l'Ordre Nouveau, Congrès de Jouy-en-Josas, 1937, rédigée par D. de Rougemont', Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

<sup>777</sup> As the previous sentences, this is a quote from 'Motion présentée au mouvement personaliste par l'Ordre Nouveau, Congrès de Jouy-en-Josas, 1937, rédigée par D. de Rougemont', Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

ou la mort'.<sup>778</sup> Following Marc's article, Jean Coutrot, a *polytechnicien* and business manager convinced of his prophetic insights, organised a conference on 12 July 1938 to try and foster a new common front of 'non-conformistes'.<sup>779</sup> Coutrot had participated in ON in 1935-6. However, the main journals to which Rougemont contributed (*Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau*) refused the invitation to Coutrot's conference.<sup>780</sup> Rougemont supported the federation of personalist movements, but not the union of all third-way groupings.

In the winter of 1938, Marc worked with Coutrot towards a union of 'non-conformistes' groupings. Marc's journal *Agir*, 'instrument de la fédération indispensable', launched in February 1939, attempted to gather the contributions of the main 'non-conformistes'. His movement 'Agir-Fédérer les Forces Françaises' attempted to federate a large spectrum of third-way movements, from technocrats such as Jean Coutrot to the Christian-Democrats of Jeune République, through Georges Valois's *L'Homme Nouveau*.<sup>781</sup> However, Marc remained lucid as to the lack of visibility of the 'non-conformistes' in France.<sup>782</sup> The context was not encouraging a third way.

By 1938, all the intellectuals in France seemed to be *engagé*, on one side or the other. Rougemont, who had been one of the first to call for *engagement*, exclaimed: 'Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent!'<sup>783</sup> I quote the first paragraph at length, to preserve the comic effect of the play on words ('moutons enragés' / engagés):

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<sup>778</sup> 'La carence des non-conformistes' and 'L'union ou la mort' were the titles of an article and a meeting Marc organised in Saint-Légier, in the Alps, in the summer of 1938. See Olivier Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète* (Besançon, 1999), 341.

<sup>779</sup> Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète*, 340-1.

<sup>780</sup> These refusals seem to suggest that the three journals in which Rougemont was active did not take Coutrot's Centre d'Etude des Problèmes Humains very seriously. On Coutrot, his Centre d'Etudes des Problèmes Humains and his 'transhumanisme', see Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète*, 331-83.

<sup>781</sup> This movement would be an important topic for research, on the basis of the material kept in Alexandre Marc's archives in Nice, which we cannot undertake here.

<sup>782</sup> Coutrot reproached Marc for thinking that the 'non-conformistes' had 'aucune influence sur le pays'. Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète*, 342.

<sup>783</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent! (Responsabilité des intellectuels)', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 6th year, 42 (15 June 1938), 19-22.



Chose étrange, le 6 février 1934 est une date de l'histoire littéraire : elle inaugure le temps des moutons enragés. Fatigués de leur innocence, voyant que l'herbe se faisait rare sous leurs pieds et qu'ils n'avaient plus de berger, aux éclairs de chaleur d'une révolution encore lointaine, ils se sont jetés dans le premier parc venu, à gauche ou à droite, et depuis lors y bêlent d'une voix aigre et anxieuse, tout en signant une quantité de manifestes. Ils ont signé [...] des deux mains, des quatre pattes, les yeux fermés, d'une croix, d'une faucille et d'un marteau [...]. Bref il n'est pas un acte commis dans le monde, depuis quatre ans, qui n'ait été vertement dénoncé par des "intellectuels" français. Mais si le monde ne s'en porte pas mieux, l'intelligence n'y gagne guère.<sup>784</sup>

Rougemont called for responsibility in the political *engagement* of the intellectual. 'Un libéral qui se soumet aux directives d'un parti ne devient pas pour si peu un penseur engagé.'<sup>785</sup>

Denis de Rougemont, like ON as a whole, was aware of the contradiction between the claim that thought and action must never be separated, and the reality of personalist thought, which was followed by little or no political action in the 1930s. This contradiction grew less and less tolerable at ON, especially since ON, unlike *Esprit* perhaps, did not constitute in itself the kind of community personalists were calling for. The painful awareness of their failure would lead Marc and Rougemont, as soon as 1937, to take action (and seek compromise) in European federalist movements. In 1936-7, Rougemont started by going back to the federalism of his home country, in relation to the development of personalism in Switzerland.

#### **4. Switzerland: a concrete example of federalism**

To study personalism in Switzerland is fascinating for two reasons: it allows us to measure the personalist claims against the reality of their social impact, and it leads us to revise Rougemont's self-portrait as a 'non-conformiste'. Indeed, for all his claims of 'non-conformisme' and revolution, Rougemont's personalism did not fit in with the concerns of the Swiss literary avant-garde; quite the opposite, it came to suit the 'défense spirituelle' launched

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<sup>784</sup> Rougemont, 'Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent! (Responsabilité des intellectuels)', 19.

<sup>785</sup> Rougemont, 'Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent! (Responsabilité des intellectuels)', 21.

by the Swiss state against the menace of a Second World War. And so we shall see that, ironically, far from being convincing the Swiss as to the necessity of a political revolution, Rougemont managed to develop personalism into a relatively mainstream cultural movement in 1937-8.

The development of personalism in Switzerland has been presented as a ‘federalist dynamic’, whereby *Esprit* set up *Esprit* groups in the French province and beyond (Switzerland and Belgium especially, for obvious linguistic reasons), and in return asked these groups to contribute to the Parisian journal.<sup>786</sup> This interplay between centre and periphery was ambivalent in Switzerland, where some intellectuals were eager to assert Swiss independence from Paris. Rougemont exemplifies the ambivalence of the development of (seemingly) French personalism in Switzerland.

At first, Rougemont’s personal convictions and the arrogant style of ON proved counterproductive among the French Swiss avant-garde. This ought to be contrasted with the open and federalist dynamic at *Esprit*. In the second half of the 1930s however, Rougemont’s attitude markedly changed, and he was able to play a positive role for the furtherance of personalism and federalism in Switzerland. In 1937, *Esprit* published a special issue on ‘Le problème suisse: personne et fédéralisme’, edited by Denis de Rougemont.<sup>787</sup> In keeping with the title of this special issue, I shall consider first ‘the Swiss problem’, that is the issues raised by the introduction of personalism in Switzerland; and then turn to the question of the ‘person and federalism’ in the Switzerland of the late 1930s. The first section tends to emphasise the ambiguities of Rougemont’s role as a mediator between Switzerland and France, while the second section illustrates the significance of the personalist movements in calling Switzerland to play a positive role in Europe on the eve of the Second World War.

## **The Swiss problem: centre and periphery**

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<sup>786</sup> Alain Clavien, Hervé Gullotti, and Pierre Mati, *"La province n'est plus la province". Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l'épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)* (Lausanne, 2003), 54.

<sup>787</sup> See *Esprit*, 61 (1 Oct. 1937).

The development of French personalism(s) was all the more sensitive in Switzerland as it was perceived as a French doctrine, at a time when (some) French Swiss writers were asserting their autonomy vis-à-vis Paris.<sup>788</sup> Although Rougemont was the first to introduce French personalists to the Swiss with his ‘Cause commune’ in 1932, he did not facilitate the transfer of personalism to his own country.<sup>789</sup> His public letter to Gilbert Trollet (a leader of the French Swiss avant-garde as we have seen), only spoke of his ‘amis, parisiens au surplus’ and ended peremptorily: ‘nous connaissons la vérité’.<sup>790</sup> To put forth the most Parisian and doctrinal sides of personalism was tactless, especially when one knew (as Rougemont did) how eager the review *Présence* was to assert French Swiss autonomy from Paris.<sup>791</sup>

The Parisian origins of personalism (albeit largely apparent as we have seen), highlighted in Rougemont’s presentation, help explain the ambivalence of the French Swiss literary avant-garde vis-à-vis personalism. For instance, Trollet remained critical of personalism in *Présence*, while he let some Swiss personalists write in his review.<sup>792</sup> Rougemont’s peremptory tone – which he shared with other ON writers – must be contrasted with *Esprit*’s openness.

Looking at Switzerland, it is clear that *Esprit* was never the French Catholic journal Maritain had wanted it to be. At the outset, in 1933, a quarter of the 500 subscribers were

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<sup>788</sup> From the perspective of the French Swiss literary field, see ‘La nébuleuse personaliste’ in Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, *“La province n’est plus la province”*. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 54-60.

<sup>789</sup> According to Francis Python, ‘le tout premier écho de l’initiative des personalistes d’*Esprit*’ to expand in Switzerland was an apology of the ‘mouvement d’*“Esprit”*’ from an overtly Christian point of view, published by Elie Gagnebin in the March 1933 *Revue de Belles-Lettres*. Elie Gagnebin, ‘Le mouvement d’*“Esprit”*’, *Revue de Belles-Lettres* (March 1933); Python, ‘Maintenir l’ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personalistes d’*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30’, 137. I would consider first Rougemont’s letter to Trollet, ‘Cause commune’ published in *Présence* in April 1932 (see Chapter 2); Rougemont, ‘Cause commune’, 12-15.

<sup>790</sup> Rougemont, ‘Cause commune’, 14-15.

<sup>791</sup> For an explanation of the stakes of the debate, at the end of the nineteenth century, see Maggetti, *L’Invention de la littérature romande: 1830-1900*.

<sup>792</sup> For instance, the February 1935 issue includes both a virulent attack on personalism by Trollet and the article of a member of the Lausanne *Esprit* group: André Bonnard, ‘Sur la revue *“Esprit”*’, *Présence*, 35, 2 (March 1935), 26-29. Trollet would later regret his ‘incorection fâcheuse’, cf. Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, *“La province n’est plus la province”*. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 56.

Swiss, most of them Protestants from the main French Swiss cities.<sup>793</sup> Francis Python has established that personalism started as a social movement in Switzerland following Mounier's series of lectures in Swiss universities in November 1933.<sup>794</sup> In the summer of 1933, Mounier had asked Rougemont to help him organise the 'conférences de novembre' in Lausanne, Fribourg, Basle, and Zurich.<sup>795</sup> Thereafter, one may assume that Rougemont played a role in the launching of *Esprit* in Switzerland, although there is no further archival evidence. In the early 1930s, however, the success of *Esprit* in Switzerland (such as it was) should be attributed to Mounier, not to Rougemont.

Mounier managed to keep *Esprit* open in social, confessional, and doctrinal terms. *Esprit* contrasted with the other Parisian reviews at the time in two significant respects: it functioned with a federalist dynamic, whereby the local *Esprit* groups were asked to contribute to the review; furthermore, Mounier did not present personalism as a dogma, but allowed for a variety of opinions and religious beliefs to coexist in *Esprit*.<sup>796</sup> ON never achieved federalist cooperation on a scale comparable to *Esprit*. Furthermore, Francis Python has argued forcefully that the non-confessional character of personalism was a considerable asset, in contrast to the rigidity of Maritain's neo-Thomism and of Maurras's Action Française.<sup>797</sup> He has shown that, between 1933 and 1939, *Esprit* was read mostly by Protestant students (Zofingue and Belles-Lettres societies) in the three cities of Lausanne, Neuchâtel, and Geneva.<sup>798</sup> These were also home to the main *Esprit* groups in Switzerland. In 1939, in the French Swiss journal *Cahiers protestants*, Mounier emphasised the plurality of

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<sup>793</sup> See Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, "*La province n'est plus la province*". *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l'épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 60n97. For a good example of the positive reception of personalism by French Swiss Protestants, see André Rivier, 'Le mouvement Esprit', *Cahiers protestants* (March 1937).

<sup>794</sup> Python, 'Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30', esp. 135-41.

<sup>795</sup> Letter of Mounier to Rougemont, 3 Aug. 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondance.

<sup>796</sup> Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, "*La province n'est plus la province*". *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l'épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 54.

<sup>797</sup> Francis Python, 'Néo-thomistes et personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse romande: convergences et divergences durant l'entre-deux-guerres', in Claude Hauser and Yvan Lamonde (eds), *Regards croisés entre le Jura, la Suisse romande et le Québec* (Laval, 2002), 102-21.

<sup>798</sup> See Python, 'Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30', 131-51.

‘personnalismes, parents certes, mais que nous ne chercherons jamais à réduire à un commun dénominateur.’<sup>799</sup>

As Francis Python has concluded, if Switzerland was one of the first countries to be touched by ‘French’ personalism, the personalist groups remained small (unfortunately, he does not give figures).<sup>800</sup> In addition, I have suggested that, in the first half of the 1930s, Rougemont played a counter-productive role in the transfer of ‘French’ personalism. A reversal was initiated in 1936: Rougemont started to take the development of personalism in Switzerland more seriously. Mounier, who put Rougemont in charge of a special issue on Switzerland, may be credited for his involvement in Swiss federalism and personalism.

## French personalism, Swiss federalism, and Europe

In 1936 Rougemont was called to play a major role in the edition of the special issue of *Esprit* on Switzerland. He was not the first choice for the project, which was initially meant to come from militants based in Switzerland.<sup>801</sup> At the end of 1935, Mounier had first asked André Bonnard and Elie Gagnebin of the Lausanne *Esprit* group to come up with a ‘Recherche de la Suisse’. In March 1936, Mounier proved to be disappointed with the result, which he described as a mere ‘annuaire de société de gymnastique’, and he rejected the first project for being too far from French preoccupations and too ‘bourgeois’ to suit *Esprit*.<sup>802</sup> At least the issue directed by Rougemont a couple of months later would not fall prey to these

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<sup>799</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, ‘Un Français découvre la Suisse’, *Cahiers protestants* (Apr.-May 1939), 161. One may take the opportunity to note that Mounier published two articles in the French Swiss *Cahiers protestants* in the 1930s, while the Swiss Catholic press, which remained largely traditionalist, never asked for his contribution. Python, ‘Néo-thomistes et personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse romande: convergences et divergences durant l'entre-deux-guerres’, 252.

<sup>800</sup> Python, ‘Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30’, 151; Python, ‘Néo-thomistes et personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse romande: convergences et divergences durant l'entre-deux-guerres’, 121.

<sup>801</sup> On the failure of the first project of special issue of *Esprit* on Switzerland (1935-6), see Python, ‘Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30’, 145-6; Python, ‘Néo-thomistes et personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse romande: convergences et divergences durant l'entre-deux-guerres’, 249-50.

<sup>802</sup> See the exchange of letters between Mounier, André Bonnard and Albert Béguin, March 1936, quoted in Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, ‘*La province n'est plus la province*’. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l'épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 57-8.

accusations. In March 1936, Rougemont wrote to Albert Béguin from Frankfurt, where he was a French lecturer that year: ‘A propos de Suisse, Mounier m’a parlé en mars du projet de N° spécial d’*Esprit*, et m’a montré le projet élaboré par les Lausannois. Une bouillabaisse. A présent, il paraît que tout est renvoyé.’<sup>803</sup> Mounier put Rougemont in charge of the Swiss project. Rougemont saw it as a means to mobilize the Swiss, rather than a Swiss contribution to French personalism:

A mon avis, il faudrait 5 à 6 articles au maximum, et une communauté sinon de ton, du moins de but manifeste. C’ à.d. pas d’articles sur la Nelle Sté helvétique et autres archéologies sentimentales, mais : une déclaration d’ensemble sur le rôle de la Suisse et sa raison d’être ; une étude sur le fédéralisme, une sur la culture, une sur l’enseignement, une sur la politique intérieure, et des notes sur des points plus particuliers et sensibles. Objectif : orienter les partis et les jeunes gens vers une création commune, dégager ce qui est valable de ce qui périmé dans nos débats actuels, enfin : agir sur les Suisses et non pas présenter aux Français un prospectus plus ou moins alléchant de nos spécialités locales. C’est ce que Lausanne ne paraît pas avoir compris.<sup>804</sup>

Whereas the Lausanne *Esprit* group had sought to put forth an objective research,<sup>8</sup> Rougemont simplified the situation for the sake of action.<sup>806</sup> And unlike the Lausanne project, his project made ‘French’ personalism relevant to a French Swiss readership. Rougemont acted *a contrario*, but perhaps not to the detriment of the French Swiss literary field.

In his presentation, Rougemont explained how several articles emphasised ‘la mission européenne de la Suisse’ and ‘sa mystique fédérale’, in order to compensate a certain

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<sup>803</sup> Rougemont to Albert Béguin, 31 May 1936, Manuscript Department, Bibliothèque de la Ville de la Chaux-de-Fonds, Albert Béguin Papers, ‘Correspondances diverses’, also quoted in Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, “*La province n’est plus la province*”. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 58-9.

<sup>804</sup> Rougemont to Albert Béguin, 31 May 1936, Manuscript Department, Bibliothèque de la Ville de la Chaux-de-Fonds, Albert Béguin Papers, ‘Correspondances diverses’, also quoted in Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, “*La province n’est plus la province*”. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 58-9.

<sup>805</sup> Bonnard, from the Lausanne *Esprit* group, had written to Mounier: ‘Ce que nous vous offrons, ce n’est ni de la *documentation objective*, ni une *profession de foi*, c’est notre inquiétude, notre *recherche*.’, André Bonnard to Emmanuel Mounier, 10 Mars 1936, Manuscript Department, Bibliothèque de la Ville de la Chaux-de-Fonds, Albert Béguin Papers, ‘Correspondances diverses’, also quoted in Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, “*La province n’est plus la province*”. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 58. The emphasis is Bonnard’s.

<sup>806</sup> He admitted ‘porter des jugements généraux qui puissent servir de cadre à une action’, in *Les groupes Esprit de Suisse*, ‘Avertissement’, *Esprit*, VI, 61 (Oct.1932), 2.

parochial tendency in Switzerland.<sup>807</sup> The debate was opened by a provocative letter from C. F. Ramuz to Rougemont, which questioned the very existence of Switzerland as an entity, and castigated the Swiss for lacking any sense of grandeur.<sup>808</sup> For a sense of balance, Rougemont also published a praise of Switzerland by the Swiss German writer Max E. Liehburg.<sup>809</sup> Unsurprisingly, this special issue of *Esprit* has become famous in Swiss literary history: Ramuz's letter to Rougemont triggered a heated discussion on the existence of a Swiss identity, at a time when the Federal authorities were seeking to foster national unity.<sup>810</sup> Ramuz and Liehburg were not personalists, as Python rightly pointed out: 'les apports de ces deux écrivains extérieurs aux groupes *Esprit*, avaient été sollicités par Denis de Rougemont pour mettre ce numéro sous tension.'<sup>811</sup> Thus Rougemont meant to provoke debates among the Swiss first, and eventually activate personalist networks in Switzerland.

'Le Problème Suisse: personne et fédéralisme' gathered contributions by all the committed personalists in Switzerland, with the exception of the Neuchâtelois philosophers Pierre Thévenaz and Philippe Muller (all the more surprising as the latter was the general secretary of the *Esprit* groups in Switzerland). It included heads of the main cantonal groups (save for Lausanne, disqualified in the first project): Xavier Schorderet (Berne), Arnold Kohler (Geneva), and Emile-Albert Niklaus (Neuchâtel). Three further contributors may be mentioned to illustrate the variety of *Esprit's* contacts in Switzerland: the trade-unionist Pierre Reymond, who was instrumental in developing a working-class personalist grouping in Neuchâtel;<sup>812</sup> André Rivier, the president of the Zofingue student society of Vaud and a longtime militant of *Esprit* (he would edit the *Cahiers suisses d'Esprit* between 1945 and

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<sup>807</sup> Les groupes *Esprit* de Suisse, 'Avertissement', *Esprit*, VI, 61 (Oct.1932), 2.

<sup>808</sup> Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz, 'Lettre', *Esprit*, VI, 61 (1 Oct. 1937).

<sup>809</sup> Max E. Liehburg, 'Le mystère suisse', *Esprit*, VI, 61 (Oct. 1937).

<sup>810</sup> On the controversies provoked by this letter, see Félicie Reymond, "Ramuz, *Esprit* et la défense spirituelle de la Suisse", 19-39. *La Suisse romande entre les deux guerres* (Lausanne, 1986).

<sup>811</sup> Python, 'Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30', 145.

<sup>812</sup> Python, 'Néo-thomistes et personalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse romande: convergences et divergences durant l'entre-deux-guerres', 247-8.

1951);<sup>813</sup> and Aldo Dami from Geneva, who was close to the League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation.<sup>814</sup>

The global mission of Switzerland – as Liehburg put it, in Rougemont’s translation – was double: ‘La mission politique qui lui incombe est celle-ci : garder le « milieu » de l’Europe. Sa mission humaine : incarner et illustrer d’une manière toujours plus pure l’idée fédérale.’<sup>815</sup> Rougemont translated Liehburg’s political argument into personalist language, in his article ‘Neutralité oblige’:

La mission essentielle de la Suisse est une mission personaliste au premier chef: sauvegarder une *Weltanschauung* où les droits du particulier et les devoirs envers le général se fécondent mutuellement [...– e.g.] les droits des communes et ceux du canton ; les droits des cantons et ceux de la Confédération ; les droits de la Suisse et ceux de l’Europe ; images et conséquences à la fois de l’équilibre fondamental entre les droits de la personne et ceux de la communauté.<sup>816</sup>

Rougemont held that if Switzerland was to remain neutral in the coming conflagration, it was in order to carry on an ‘expérience témoin, l’annonciatrice d’une Europe fédérée dont elle prouve la réalité en rassemblant dans un état nos trois plus grandes civilisations, la germanique, la latine et la française.’<sup>817</sup> From 1937 onwards, Rougemont would not cease to emphasise the interdependence between Switzerland and the rest of Europe. Since *Les Méfaits* (1929) and the early 1930s, his attitude had fundamentally changed vis-à-vis Switzerland. Was this change the result of personalist thinking? Was it a reaction to the international situation? Was it simply maturity?

The change in Rougemont’s attitude is patent if one compares his claims in *Présence* in 1932 with his affirmations in *Suisse romande* in 1938. The comparison is justified since *Suisse romande* (1937-9) succeeded *Présence* (1932-6): both reviews gathered the same team

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<sup>813</sup> André Rivier, 'Conclusions: La Suisse, lieu d'une action personaliste', *Esprit*, VI, 61; Rivier, 'Le mouvement Esprit'. On the postwar: Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, "*La province n'est plus la province*". *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l'épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 320-2.

<sup>814</sup> Aldo Dami, 'Une démocratie collégiale, fédérative, représentative, et directe', *Esprit*, VI, 61 (Nov. 1937).

<sup>815</sup> Liehburg, 'Le mystère suisse', 19. (transl. Rougemont)

<sup>816</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Neutralité oblige', *Esprit*, VI, 61, 26, n.1.

<sup>817</sup> Rougemont, 'Neutralité oblige', 27.



of avant-garde French Swiss writers.<sup>818</sup> In *Suisse romande*, as in *Présence*, the development of personalism was hindered by its (apparent) French and Christian origins. And so in December 1937, the French Swiss writer Pierre Beausire reacted to the special issue of *Esprit* on Switzerland.<sup>819</sup> He agreed that Switzerland needed a vigorous debate, yet he suspected personalism might be ‘un christianisme camouflé’ and that *Esprit* wanted to found ‘une société sur le modèle de la société chrétienne’ – a programme he rejected as both harmful and illusory.<sup>820</sup> In turn, Albert Béguin (a French Swiss convert to Catholicism and future editor of *Esprit* after Mounier’s death in 1950) condemned Beausire’s ‘dogmatisme nietzschéen’ in *Les Cahiers du Sud*.<sup>821</sup> Rougemont, however, argued that there was more to personalism than parochiality. He explained the particularity of his position, as a Protestant personalist, but he insisted that this was compatible with a non-religious approach to European history and politics:

En tant que protestant personnaliste, je tiens que seule la foi réelle – celle qui agit, et non celle qui endort – donne à notre attitude son sens *dernier*. Beaucoup de mes camarades, la majorité même, ne partagent pas cette certitude. Ils en ont d’autres, que je crois insuffisantes, et je le leur dis en toute franchise. Du moins ne tiennent-ils pas le christianisme dont je parle pour une niaiserie sentimentale. A défaut de la foi, ils connaissent l’Histoire, et savent de quoi l’Europe est faite.<sup>822</sup>

Rougemont’s response to Beausire in *Suisse romande* in January 1938 leads us to conclude on Part I of this dissertation.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>818</sup> *Suisse romande* numbered eighteen issues between Oct. 1937 and Dec. 1939. The journal was edited by Daniel Simond and involved contributors from the various French Swiss Cantons: René Bovard, Albert Béguin, Gustave Roud, Edmond Gilliard, Pierre Beausire and Jean Descoullayes. The team was more or less the same as that of *Présence* (1932-6; 1946; 1956-9) and *Suisse contemporaine* (1941-9). On the aims see Daniel Simond, ‘Suisse romande’, *Suisse romande*, 1 (1 Oct. 1937). For a brief historical analysis, see Clavien, Gullotti, and Mati, “La province n’est plus la province”. *Les relations culturelles franco-suissees à l’épreuve de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1935-1950)*, 46-53.

<sup>819</sup> Pierre Beausire, ‘Le Personnalisme en Suisse’, *Suisse romande*, 3 (Dec. 1937), 129-30.

<sup>820</sup> Beausire, ‘Le Personnalisme en Suisse’, 129-30.

<sup>821</sup> Albert Béguin, ‘Une nouvelle revue: Suisse romande’, *Les Cahiers du sud*, 208 (Jan. 1938), 86-7.

<sup>822</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Réponse’, *Suisse romande*, 1, 4 (Jan. 1938), 183-4.

Rougemont's response to Beausire defines three main elements of personalist philosophy, to be examined in Part II. Firstly, Rougemont combined Eurocentrism with pluralism (departing from an inward-looking Switzerland in both respects): 'Comme l'Europe, le personalisme est essentiellement pluraliste, c'est-à-dire: fédéraliste. Il exalte les différences en ce qu'elles ont de créateur.'<sup>823</sup> Chapter 5 will show how the personalism of Denis de Rougemont, drawn from *Ordre Nouveau*, sought to promote a pluralist and federalist state.

Secondly, federalist personalism (the doctrine of ON) was presented as *the* European third way. In Rougemont's view, personalism embodied 'la tradition centrale de l'Occident [...] et l'individualisme et le collectivisme ne sont que des déviations complémentaires et périodiques de cette ligne de plus grande efficacité.'<sup>824</sup> Personalists claimed to represent the genuine 'neither right nor left' line and to defend unity in diversity, in accordance with Western European thought. Chapter 6 will examine how, on the 'neither right nor left' front, they competed with fascism (in a generic sense).

Finally, in moral terms, Rougemont defined personalism as the concrete love of real human beings and a force of resistance against tyranny: 'Le personalisme, c'est l'amour *concret* des hommes réels [...] c'est [...] la volonté d'agir dans le sens de ce qui libère en l'homme les forces de résistance et de création, systématiquement déprimées par les tyrannies que l'on sait.'<sup>825</sup> Personalism as concrete 'love' and as a force of resistance will be studied in Chapter 7.

The aim – particularly important in 1938 – was to maintain 'la possibilité de vivre et de créer *sa* vérité – bonne ou mauvaise – contre les fous totalitaires de droite ou de gauche, leurs guerres et leurs cultes d'Etat.'<sup>826</sup> If it is not yet entirely clear why Rougemont thought that personalism was the embodiment of Western European culture, it is already possible to

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<sup>823</sup> Rougemont, 'Réponse', 183.

<sup>824</sup> Rougemont, 'Réponse', 183.

<sup>825</sup> Rougemont, 'Réponse', 183.

<sup>826</sup> Rougemont, 'Réponse', 184.

close this Part I on how he militated for personalism and federalism, in Switzerland as in Europe as a whole.

Throughout the 1930s, Rougemont sought to federate the various personalist movements and to promote them to the larger public. On the eve of the Second World War, seeing that debates at *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau* were not leading to any practical move (he diagnosed 'l'espèce de paralysie dont souffre le mouvement personnaliste'), Rougemont refused to blame the overly academic or intellectual complexion of the movement.<sup>827</sup> Their tendency to rationalize and ponder was not at fault; 'Je crains bien qu'au contraire le mouvement ait péché par défaut de radicalisme dans sa critique négative.'<sup>828</sup> Rougemont's experience of personalist discussions, in small groups and large congresses, led him to the conclusion: 'C'est l'impuissance à « sortir du plan des vieux partis » qui paralyse l'action'.<sup>829</sup> The personalist movement had fallen short because of its moderation: 'La critique des partis n'est stérile que dans la mesure où elle n'est pas radicale.'<sup>830</sup> Thus Rougemont had no illusion as to the political and social failure of the personalist revolution in the 1930s; but he still believed in the revolutionary character of personalism.

Ironically, it is his 'idée suisse' – which had nothing revolutionary in it – that constitutes one of the most significant contributions of personalism to European history. To give a noble sense to Swiss neutrality – an implicit reference in Rougemont's article 'Neutralité oblige' in *Esprit* (October 1938) – was a vital contribution to Swiss intellectual history.<sup>831</sup> Rougemont managed to develop an 'idée suisse' that was neither parochial nor nationalist, nor even national.<sup>832</sup> And here lies the irony of Rougemont's personalist activism in the 1930s: originally supposed to provoke a revolution (at once spiritual, cultural and

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<sup>827</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'D'une critique stérile', *Esprit*, 80 (May 1939), 264.

<sup>828</sup> Rougemont, 'D'une critique stérile', 264.

<sup>829</sup> Rougemont, 'D'une critique stérile', 265.

<sup>830</sup> Rougemont, 'D'une critique stérile', 267.

<sup>831</sup> Python, 'Maintenir l'ordre ou le faire? Présence et dilemmes des personnalistes d'*Esprit* en Suisse dans les années 30', 150-1.

<sup>832</sup> To Beausire who doubted the existence of a 'Swiss' as a type, Rougemont replied: 'Je crois à « l'idée suisse » telle que l'exprime Liehburg. Idée qui exclut l'existence d'un type suisse racial, ou « national » au sens unitaire. Je ne crois même pas à l'*homo alpinus*, création polémique de Ramuz. ', in Rougemont, 'Réponse', 182n2.

political), it met the needs of the Swiss state, arguably the least revolutionary of all states, as the Second World War drew near.<sup>833</sup>

Rougemont failed to convince youth to form of the ‘common front’ of European third ways, he also failed to federate personalist movements and to provoke a revolution. But to give a noble sense to neutrality, to promote a sense of pride in one’s country that would be neither parochial nor national, and to encourage personal and political freedom were three of Rougemont’s finest achievements as a personalist activist.

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<sup>833</sup> This occurred in the late 1930s, as we have seen. Thereafter, the apology of the Swiss Confederation, ‘*The Heart of Europe*’, would become central to Rougemont’s wartime writings, see esp. Rougemont, *Mission ou démission*; Denis de Rougemont, *Nicolas de Flue. Légende dramatique en trois actes (Musique d'Arthur Honegger)* (Neuchâtel, 1939); Denis de Rougemont, *Qu'est-ce que la Ligue du Gothard?* (Berne, 1940); Rougemont, *La Suisse ou l'histoire d'un peuple heureux*; Denis de Rougemont and Charlotte Muret, *The Heart of Europe* (New York, 1941).

## PART II. PERSONALISM AS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

'*L'Ordre Nouveau* a été [...] le grand mouvement d'idées de notre jeunesse. Il y a peut-être eu, dans ces années, des mouvements plus entraînants ou plus importants, mais aucun n'a remué autant d'idées sur l'économie, l'organisation de l'Etat, la suppression du prolétariat, les relations entre les nations.'<sup>834</sup> In 1930s France, there was a multiplicity of movements calling for the reform of the parliamentary system, but as Nicolas Roussellier has remarked, 'la plupart des projets révisionnistes n'opèrent pas le lien entre réforme de l'Etat et nouvelle pensée économique.'<sup>835</sup> Ordre Nouveau (ON) not only made the link between state reform and new economic thought, but also made philosophy and anthropology the basis for political and economic theory. Starting from an understanding of the human person, through social and economic relations, to the political system, ON developed global plans for a 'révolution'.

The political doctrine of ON has been the subject of three doctoral dissertations already. Firstly, we have seen that, in 1969, Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle presented ON as the most original 'mouvement de jeunes dans les années 1930-1934'.<sup>836</sup> One of the limitations of his study, mentioned in Chapter 1, is that it takes for granted the actors' self-presentation as 'non-conformistes'. It is necessary to take more critical distance vis-à-vis their claims to represent an avant-garde. Later, in 1986, Pierre Izard analysed the federalism of ON in a voluminous doctoral dissertation, unfortunately unpublished and somewhat dated, not least because Izard's aim was to show that this doctrine was 'toujours actuelle'.<sup>837</sup> Lastly, in 2000, Jean Jacob has contradicted Izard's sympathetic account of ON, by suggesting that ON was a

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<sup>834</sup> Pierre Andreu, *Le Rouge et le Blanc, 1828-1944* (Paris, 1977), 69.

<sup>835</sup> Nicolas Roussellier, 'La contestation du modèle républicain en France dans les années 30 : la réforme de l'Etat', in Serge Bernstein and Odile Rudelle (eds), *Le modèle républicain* (Paris, 1992), 323.

<sup>836</sup> Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années trente. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (1st edn. Paris, 1969), 105-23. (Republished in 2001).

<sup>837</sup> Pierre Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)' (Thèse pour le doctorat de 3e cycle, Université de Lille III, 1986), 7. This thesis is over 700 pages long.

proto-fascist movement – a (mis)interpretation that will require careful examination in Chapter 6. Both Izard and Jacob express strong political preferences; yet where Izard is laudatory, Jacob is disapproving.<sup>838</sup>

Thus, my assessment of the federalist personalism of ON in Chapter 5 comes after three French doctorates in political sciences. From a historical point of view, these studies fall short on two important points. On the one hand, it is not enough to account for federalist personalism from a political standpoint. If one does not start with the meaning of the slogan ‘*primauté du spirituel*’, one fails to understand the economic and political theories that depended on spiritual tenets. On the other hand, all three political scientists assess ON in terms of modern/anti-modern dichotomies. Central to their analysis is the question whether the ON’s critique of the nation-state is modern (Loubet del Bayle and Izard) or anti-modern (Jacob). Kevin Passmore has showed the limits inherent in judging French history against the expected outcome of modernisation (the stalemate society thesis).<sup>839</sup> Regardless of whether it was modern or not, Chapter 5 argues that ON was a most ambitious spiritual, political, and economic thought. Given the scope of the personalist project, it should not be surprising that it did not succeed in every respect.

Following logically on from Chapter 5, Chapter 6 will address the most controversial issue in the historiography: was the personalist third way akin the fascist third way? In attempting to answer this question, the limits of the polarity fascism vs. anti-fascism, which organises much of 1930s narrative, will become clear. The case study of Denis de Rougemont will show how, for contemporaries, the question of fascism went beyond the political plane. Finally, by focussing on *L’Amour et l’Occident* (1939), Chapter 7 will reflect upon the moral and theological implications of Rougemont’s personalism proper.

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<sup>838</sup> Jean Jacob, *Le Retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau", Les métamorphoses d'un fédéralisme européen* (Geneva/Paris, 2000).

<sup>839</sup> Kevin Passmore, 'The construction of crisis in interwar France', in Brian Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism, essays on the French authoritarian right* (Oxford, 2005), 151-99.

## Chapter 5. The federalist personalism of Ordre Nouveau

The federalist personalism of Ordre Nouveau originated in the thought of Marc and Dandieu. Robert Aron, Daniel-Rops, Rougemont, Jean Jardin, René Dupuis, Claude Chevalley and later contributors, including the polytechnicians Robert Gibrat, Robert Loustau, Pierre Prévost, the Ollivier brothers, Xavier de Lignac and Jean Coutrot,<sup>840</sup> also played a part in the elaboration of the doctrine. In his thesis, Pierre Izard focused exclusively on the ‘founding fathers’ who pursued federalist personalism after the Second World War (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont), and he added a recognition of the influence of Dandieu.<sup>841</sup> However, in studying ON, there is no reason why one should leave aside the members of ON who did not pursue federalism after the war, namely Jean Jardin, Robert Loustau, Robert Gibrat, whose involvement with Vichy would discredit the whole movement; but also Xavier de Lignac, who would become a prominent associate of General de Gaulle under the pseudonym Jean Chauveau; and Albert Ollivier, who specialized in the media like Lignac, and would serve both under Vichy and in De Gaulle’s Rassemblement Pour la France (RPF).<sup>842</sup> In this chapter, ON members are considered regardless of their subsequent trajectory.

The main source for this chapter is the journal *L’Ordre Nouveau*, which ON started publishing in May 1933.<sup>843</sup> Forty-five issues were printed between May 1933 and September 1938, a time-span that allowed a broad scope of research and depth in analysis. There were

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<sup>840</sup> On Jean Coutrot and the ON, see Olivier Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète* (Besançon, 1999), 121-31.

<sup>841</sup> Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)', 9-10.

<sup>842</sup> On Jardin’s trajectory, see Pierre Assouline, *Jean Jardin 1904-1976: Une éminence grise* (Paris, 1986). See also John Hellman, *The communitarian third way: Alexandre Marc's Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000* (Montréal, 2002), 107-9, esp. on the involvement of Jardin, Loustau, Gibrat and Ollivier at Vichy: 239 n 69. Lastly, see Daniel Lindenberg, 'Le destin des "non-conformistes": un demi-siècle d'aventures intellectuelles (1950-2000)', Paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, 50th annual conference, Paris, BNF, 19 June 2004.

<sup>843</sup> As mentioned already, the Ordre Nouveau (ON) refers to the movement, and *L’Ordre Nouveau* indicates the journal.

approximately a thousand subscribers to *L'Ordre Nouveau* and its circulation never went beyond two thousand copies.<sup>844</sup> *L'Ordre Nouveau* rejected any affiliation with political parties and emphasised doctrinal reflection. The degree of abstraction of the articles contrasts with other political journals, which gave more space to domestic and international news. Although ON insisted on the need to translate doctrine into action, as we have seen in Chapter 4, *L'Ordre Nouveau* had analytical purposes.

*L'Ordre Nouveau* was entirely reissued in five thick volumes in 1997.<sup>845</sup> To date, *L'Ordre Nouveau* has only been studied in detail by sympathisers of the cause of integral federalism. Thomas Keller – who is one of these sympathisers – has distinguished three phases in the history of the journal.<sup>846</sup> In the initial phase, up to January 1934, ON established a doctrine of its own, through cultural transfer and adaptation of personalism. In the second phase, ON launched an appeal to technocrats – following *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 7 (15 Jan. 1934) entitled ‘Appel aux techniciens’ – so as to translate its personalist doctrine into action. The last phase, from 1936 to 1938, was largely a return to the doctrinal research of the early years, symbolized by the re-publication of articles by Arnaud Dandieu in the last two issues.<sup>847</sup>

Only the distinctive contributions of Alexandre Marc and Arnaud Dandieu have been the object of historical scrutiny: Marc was the inventor of personalism in France, Dandieu the

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<sup>844</sup> According to Robert Aron, *Fragments d'une vie* (Paris, 1981), 108.

<sup>845</sup> Published in Aoste, by Le Château Edizioni (1997) with an introduction by Marc Heim and an index by Myriam Geay-Ouadia. Reissuing *L'Ordre Nouveau* was a project dear to Marc, who had it completed by a European federalist and regionalist movement in Aoste (Italy), the Fondation Emile Chanoux.

<sup>846</sup> Thomas Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse: Personalistische Intellektuellendebatten der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich, 2001), 231; Thomas Keller, 'Le personalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres entre l'Allemagne et la France', *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe* (Nice, 1999), 503.

<sup>847</sup> ‘A propos de la Révolution Française par Arnaud Dandieu’, *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 44 (Aug. 1938), 1-10 [initially published in *Le Mercure de France*, 15, II (Feb. 1928)]; ‘De la cité à l’humanité par Arnaud Dandieu’, *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 45 (Sept. 1938), 1-9 [excerpt from ‘Y-a-t-il un seuil entre Cité et Humanité’, *Archives de la philosophie du droit*, 1-2 (1933)].



thinker of economic reorganisation.<sup>848</sup> The essential contribution of René Dupuis has been overlooked by historians to date. This chapter shows how Dupuis's reassessment of political sovereignty was decisive for ON. Otherwise, the 'réelle unité de la doctrine', as Izard put it, largely justifies a presentation of federalist personalism that does not distinguish between personal contributions.<sup>849</sup> Frequent references to Rougemont in this chapter should not suggest authorship; the aim is merely to express in his own words the general views of the ON group.

ON members worked in teams. As far as possible, they tried to sign books and articles in pairs, and at any rate they debated their ideas before putting them down on paper. This implies that the claim of authorship of particular concepts proves pointless in most cases. In the 1970s and 1980s, Marc and Rougemont squabbled about historical details, such as who had first coined the expression 'Une politique à hauteur d'homme' (a rough French equivalent of 'small is beautiful').<sup>850</sup> One must read Rougemont's postwar reconstructions of the 1930s with critical distance; this is all the difficulty of interpreting Rougemont's '*journaux non-intimes*', as Ackermann did.<sup>851</sup> By giving an overview of the doctrine of federalist

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<sup>848</sup> Studies of Alexandre Marc started with Denis de Rougemont, 'Alexandre Marc et l'invention du personnalisme', *Le Fédéralisme et Alexandre Marc* (Lausanne, 1974). Besides his work on Alexandre Marc already mentioned, Christian Roy has given several studies of Arnaud Dandieu: Christian Roy, 'La question du travail dans la pensée d'Arnaud Dandieu', *L'Europe en formation* (Summer 1998), 111-40; Christian Roy, 'Révolution et Révélation: Arnaud Dandieu entre Nietzsche et Jésus', *L'Europe en formation*, 315-316 (Winter 1999 - Spring 2000), 199-230; Christian Roy, 'La théorie maussienne à l'origine de la critique sociale personnaliste d'Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933) : revenu de citoyenneté, service civil, libération du crédit', *Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* (1st sem. 2002), 357-71; Christian Roy, 'Transpositions of Mauss' theory of the gift in the personalist social critique of Arnaud Dandieu', in Antoon Vanderveelde (ed.) *Gifts and interests* (Leuven, 2000), 177-89.

<sup>849</sup> Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)', 7.

<sup>850</sup> Marc wryly noted: 'Tu as beau avoir été le premier à mesurer la « hauteur d'homme »' and reminded Rougemont that it was he (Marc) who wrote *A hauteur d'homme*, that Rougemont published (Paris, Je Sers, 1948). (Marc to Rougemont, 31 May 1978) Two years later, waiting for Rougemont's answer, he supposed that Rougemont 'se tâte probablement pour savoir s'il ne ferait pas mieux de renoncer à ses absurdes revendications sur le titre « A hauteur d'homme »', Marc to Rougemont, 31 May 1978, and 21 Feb. 1980, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence. The question could be solved by the epigraph '...Une politique à hauteur d'homme... DENIS DE ROUGEMONT' of the article by Marc, under the pseudonym of Michel Glady 'A hauteur d'homme (Des frontières au fédéralisme)', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 15 (Nov. 1934), 8-22. In this epigraph, Marc implicitly refers to Rougemont's section of *Politique de la personne* (c1934): 'POUR UNE POLITIQUE A HAUTEUR D'HOMME', see Denis de Rougemont, *Politique de la personne* (2nd edn. Paris, 1946), 23-6. Ramuz may have inspired the expression, with his anti-communist essay, reviewed by Denis de Rougemont, 'C.F. Ramuz, Taille d'homme', *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 247 (1 Apr. 1934).

<sup>851</sup> Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle. Combats pour la liberté, Le Journal d'une époque* (2 vols. vol. 2. Geneva, 1996); Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle. De la Révolte à l'engagement* (2 vols. vol. 1. Geneva, 1996).

personalism, this chapter shows the extent to which Denis de Rougemont repeated the political and economic principles of ON. We shall see that Rougemont contributed very little to ON economic research, a little more to political thought, and significantly more to spiritual reflection.

Following the ON motto – ‘Spirituel d’abord, économique ensuite, politique à leur service’<sup>852</sup> – the first section explores the meanings of the spiritual emphasis, the second section treats the economic aspects, and the third turns to the political critiques and constructive proposals of federalist personalism.

### **1. ‘The spiritual first’<sup>853</sup>**

Ordre Nouveau proved open to the trends of thought that were revolutionizing philosophy, political theory and theology, from Nietzsche to Karl Barth, through Marx and Kierkegaard. In terms of the history of philosophy, it is possible to situate ON among the second ‘generation’ of phenomenologists: they thought that Husserl never fulfilled his promise to return to concrete things. As Thomas Keller has noted, this ‘generation’ of thinkers undertook a concrete analysis of historical existence (Hans Jonas), of the *zoon politikon* (Hannah Arendt), of empathy and human sciences (Edith Stein), of the existant, the self and alterity (Emmanuel Levinas), of the body (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), and of incarnate existence (Paul-Ludwig Landsberg, Denis de Rougemont, and Alexandre Marc).<sup>854</sup> The depth of philosophical research at ON contrasts with most contemporary revolutionary groupings. Among those who called upon spirituality against the ambient materialism, ON personalists made the most serious attempt to define the ‘révolution spirituelle’ in non-confessional terms.

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<sup>852</sup> ‘L’Action. I. “L’Ordre Nouveau”, *Plans*, 9 (Nov. 1931).

<sup>853</sup> See Denis de Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, ‘Spirituel d’abord’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 3 (July 1933), 13-17.

<sup>854</sup> Keller, ‘Le personalisme de l’entre-deux-guerres’, 504.

## The call for a spiritual revolution

It has been remarked that, up to 1934 at least, the ‘révolution spirituelle’ was elusive compared to the concrete plans of the so-called ‘réalistes’.<sup>855</sup> For instance, the ‘Positions d’attaque pour l’Ordre Nouveau’, published in December 1933, do not give a clear political theory.<sup>856</sup> Instead, they offer a non-systematic definition of the human person. ‘Positions d’attaque pour l’Ordre Nouveau’ is a key text for understanding the personalism of ON because it gives a definition of the person signed by all the ON members: ‘Nous définissons la personne comme un *acte* et non pas comme un donné physique ou moral, matériel ou abstrait. La personne, c’est l’individu engagé dans le conflit créateur’.<sup>857</sup> To define the person as an act is to emphasise that the person freely affirms his or her being, his identity, by means of ‘un choix permanent, donc un risque permanent, c’est-à-dire une tension permanente, qui mesure la valeur même de l’homme.’<sup>858</sup> Thus, for ON, ‘tension, risque, choix, acte, tels sont les éléments de toute liberté réelle et créatrice, partant, de toute dignité humaine.’<sup>859</sup> Freedom, expressed in tension, risk, choice, and act, is the central tenet of human dignity.

The emphasis on act and creativity has been (mis)interpreted as meaning that ON only regarded human dignity as the attribute of the very few who struggled to live in permanent tension, taking risks and making choices, acting out their life rather than undergoing circumstances.<sup>860</sup> However the understanding of personhood as a way of being – ‘la personne c’est l’individu engagé dans le conflit créateur’, a definition already provided by Rougemont

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<sup>855</sup> Olivier Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30* (Paris, 2002).

<sup>856</sup> Arnaud Dandieu, Denis de Rougemont, Daniel-Rops, Robert Aron, Alexandre Marc, René Dupuis, Jean Jardin, and Claude Chevalley, 'Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau', *La Revue des vivants*, 12 (Dec. 1933), 1821-7. It is interesting to note that *La Revue des vivants* was a stronghold of reformism. It was created in 1927 by Henry de Jouvenel, a prominent reformist writer and politician (Senator of Corrèze in 1928). It conveyed the realist proposals for reform, whether radical (Pierre Cot) or socialist (Marcel Déat). See Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 48-9, 89, 163.

<sup>857</sup> Dandieu, Rougemont, Daniel-Rops, Aron, Marc, Dupuis, Jardin, and Chevalley, 'Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau', 1823.

<sup>858</sup> Dandieu, Rougemont, Daniel-Rops, Aron, Marc, Dupuis, Jardin, and Chevalley, 'Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau', 1823.

<sup>859</sup> Dandieu, Rougemont, Daniel-Rops, Aron, Marc, Dupuis, Jardin, and Chevalley, 'Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau', 1823.

<sup>860</sup> e.g. Simone Weil, 'La personne et le sacré. Collectivité, personne, impersonnel, droit, justice', *Ecrits de Londres et dernières lettres* (Paris, 1953).

and Daniel-Rops in July 1933<sup>861</sup>— does suggest another interpretation. The person was not opposed to the individual, for it was a specific individual: all human beings had within them an inherent dignity that allowed them to seek inner freedom. In any circumstances, each human being would be facing ‘creative tensions’ before the risks to be taken and the choices to be made. These conflicts were potentially creative, and solving conflicts shaped the character of a person. Thus, in the philosophy of ON, it was the act which best expressed personal choices (and freedom). Witnessing a personal act was as close as an outsider would come to understanding the person.

Rougemont and Dandieu emphasised the act as the starting point of the spiritual revolution: ‘Si l’on ne part pas tout de suite de l’acte, on ne partira jamais’.<sup>862</sup> There was no distinction between the private and the public act of revolution. And so, the call for a personal act, asserting personal freedom, was combined with the call for political action and anti-parliamentarism, ‘car la Révolution commence par ce qui fait mourir un parlement : par une décision, par un acte’.<sup>863</sup> Rougemont and Jardin continued, in the special ON issue of *L’Avant-Poste* (a Belgian third-way journal): ‘Commencer la Révolution c’est comprendre, mais jusqu’aux moelles, que le monde n’est pas un parlement, qu’il ne s’agit pas pour nous d’aller nous asseoir quelque part, mais bien de marcher, de vivre, de créer et d’abattre, à droite, à gauche, au centre, peu importe, – partout où une résistance avare, inerte, ou platement cynique, donne prise à notre acte, donne lieu de manifester ce qu’il y a d’humain en nous-même : la personne.’<sup>864</sup> This assertion helps explain why, in their view, parliamentary institutions, as the expression of bourgeois individualism, were radically opposed to the person, understood to be a decision and an act.

Dandieu was the philosopher of the act. He was the key thinker of ON revolution. His accidental death on 6 August 1933, following a general infection after a minor operation, has

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<sup>861</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 14.; also in Dandieu and Rougemont, « L’acte – la notion d’acte comme point de départ. » (c1933), in *L’Europe en formation*, 245 (sept-oct 1981), 36.

<sup>862</sup> Dandieu and Rougemont, « L’acte – la notion d’acte comme point de départ. » (c1933), in *L’Europe en formation*, 245 (sept-oct 1981), 29-37.

<sup>863</sup> Denis de Rougemont and Jean Jardin, 'Ni droite ni gauche', *L’Avant-poste*, V, 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1934), 12.

<sup>864</sup> Rougemont and Jardin, 'Ni droite ni gauche', 12-13.

been considered as the gravest blow to the spiritual revolution planned by ON – ‘Est-il perte plus irréparable pour notre génération ?’ asked Robert Aron on the morrow of Dandieu’s death.<sup>865</sup> Aron described his last hours to Rougemont (who was away from Paris at the time): ‘Il est longtemps resté lucide, discutant philosophie et invoquant le Dieu de son enfance... [...] il est entré dans le coma parlant jusqu’au bout, dans son délire, de l’Ordre Nouveau.’<sup>86</sup> Marc was deeply impressed.<sup>867</sup> He immediately voiced his determination to continue fighting for the ON revolution, as if it had already had a martyr.<sup>868</sup> For decades to come, Rougemont would bewail the death of Dandieu as a prophet for modern times.<sup>869</sup> Both Marc and Rougemont lived their life faithfully dedicated to the purpose of a spiritual revolution.<sup>870</sup> On the day of Dandieu’s funeral, the ON group met again, as Dandieu had asked on his death-bed.<sup>871</sup> It is important to see ON as an enterprise of serious and dedicated men (plus a few women), who genuinely perceived themselves as an avant-garde revolutionary unit.

Following Dandieu, the revolutionary act was seen as an affirmation of being, a guarantee of human dignity. With reference to Dandieu, Rougemont explained that the person – and personalism of course – was necessarily revolutionary:

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<sup>865</sup> Aron to Rougemont, [7] August 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>866</sup> Aron to Rougemont, [7] August 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>867</sup> The death of Dandieu and conversations with Rougemont played a crucial role in Marc’s decision to get baptised in the Autumn of 1933. Marc to Rougemont, 19 August 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’ and Christian Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe (1904-1934): L’Ordre Nouveau aux origines du personnalisme* (Nice, 1999), 132-4.

<sup>868</sup> E.g.: ‘Nous avons répété toute la journée : ah, si Rougemont était là, avec nous, près de nous, notre immense peine serait un peu plus légère à porter. Car il faut que nous nous considérions comme un carré dont les rangs se resserrent chaque fois que l’un des combattants tombe. Dandieu est mort en invoquant l’O.N. [...] il est de notre devoir de persévérer & de maintenir.’, Marc to Rougemont, [7] August 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>869</sup> See his obituary Denis de Rougemont, ‘L’Oeuvre et la mort d’Arnaud Dandieu’, *Présence*, 3 (Autumn 1934), 57-9. Forty years later, Rougemont maintained: ‘Face aux totalitaires de toutes couleurs et aux démocraties plutôt décolorées des années 30, Arnaud Dandieu définissait la seule Révolution que je tiens aujourd’hui encore pour nécessaire et réalisable, comme un élan *libérateur* qui nous porte à la fois vers l’*universel* et vers la *personne*.’ In ‘Arnaud Dandieu, la Révolution et les Régions’, *L’Europe en formation* (March 1971), 11.

<sup>870</sup> Marc’s homage to Rougemont in 1985 actually applies to himself. Alexandre Marc, ‘Heureux ceux qui sont morts dans la fidélité’, *L’Europe en formation*, 262 (Nov.-Dec. 1985).

<sup>871</sup> ‘Dès ce soir, comme il l’a demandé au cours de son agonie, nous reprenons nos réunions. Sa mort a eu quelque chose d’héroïque : dans le délire, très cohérent et visionnaire, qui a impressionné même les médecins, il nous a laissé des commandements qui nous permettront de prolonger son œuvre jusqu’au succès.’, Aron to Rougemont, 9 August 1933, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

Révolutionnaire non point par engouement généreux et superficiel, démagogie, volonté de puissance ou de brutalité, mauvaise humeur contre la vie ou haine contre la moitié des hommes : mais parce qu'il avait reconnu que l'acte révolutionnaire est l'origine en même temps que la garantie unique de la dignité humaine. L'action n'est pas q[uel]q[ue] chose à quoi la personne se décide un beau matin, pour des raisons. L'action, l'*acte*, c'est la personne même ; c'est aussi ce qu'il y a en l'homme de spécifiquement humain, [c'est-à-dire] de créateur.<sup>872</sup>

Thus the revolutionary act founded the dignity of the human person because it expressed creativity. Whereas Jewish and Christian personalists had to call upon the Bible to say what constitutes the dignity of all men and women (that all were made in the image of God), Dandieu was able to say where the inalienable dignity of the human person comes from without referring to God: the personal act as creation was the origin and the sole guarantee of human dignity.

### **Agnostic, atheist, and religious understandings of 'spiritual'**

Within ON, agnostic or atheist views contrasted with Jewish or Christian interpretations of what made each human person infinitely precious. The ON members chose a non-confessional line, fully aware that this was an uncomfortable position at a time when the religious and the secular were polarizing French society.<sup>873</sup> A non-confessional approach was important in two ways. First, it was the clue to the universal claims of the movement. ON was concerned with all human persons, whatever their beliefs, race, nationality. Secondly, and this is obviously related to the first reason, the political endeavours of ON towards European unity could not be sustained without a non-confessional approach, including both religious and secular understandings of human dignity.

A non-confessional approach was particularly dear to the founder, Alexandre Marc, who struggled to reconcile the Nietzschean views of Arnaud Dandieu, with the traditionalist

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<sup>872</sup> Manuscript note by Rougemont, 'Dandieu' [c1936?], Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: 'I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934.'

<sup>873</sup> Nowadays, the non-confessional approach is politically correct. See for example Maria Villela Petit, 'Personne, droit, droits de l'homme', in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L'actualité d'un grand témoin. Acte du colloque tenu à l'UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 152-9.

Catholicism of Jean Jardin and Daniel-Rops, on the one hand, and the militant Protestantism of Denis de Rougemont, on the other. To quote Rougemont in 1974:

Du point de vue religieux, qui est capital, en dépit de ce que pense un vain peuple d'intellectuels parisiens, voici l'état du groupe *O.N.* en 1933 : Rops et Jardin (et peut-être Dupuis) sont catholiques déclarés ; moi protestant d'école barthienne. Arnaud Dandieu d'origine catholique, Claude Chevalley d'origine protestante, Robert Aron d'origine juive, se disent à l'époque nietzschéens (tous les trois rejoindront plus tard leur « foi »). Enfin, Marc va devenir Catholique, en 1933. La résultante de ces diversités est une neutralité religieuse totale pour l'ensemble du groupe *O.N.*, tandis que l'obédience confessionnelle d'*Esprit* ne fait aucun doute.<sup>874</sup>

Thus ON drew on Nietzsche as well as on Péguy, for example.<sup>875</sup> Arnaud Dandieu strove to reconcile 'la pensée de Nietzsche et de Jésus', drawing a parallel between the 'notion chrétienne de charité' and the 'plaisir nietzschéen de donner'.<sup>876</sup> *L'Ordre Nouveau* managed to combine religious and atheist sources, albeit with important discrepancies depending on the authors.

Since ON has often been presented as Nietzschean, it is interesting to see how the ON group appropriated and adapted Nietzsche for its own purposes. His opposition to the state ('the coldest of all cold monsters') was often quoted.<sup>877</sup> The 'Textes de doctrine et d'action' on the inside back cover of *L'Ordre Nouveau* referred to Nietzsche twice (*Genealogy of Morals*, II, 2,<sup>878</sup> and *Thus spoke Zarathustra*<sup>879</sup>). ON managed to explain that Nietzsche claimed 'le primat de ce que nous appelons *la personne*. (Ce que Nietzsche appelle individu souverain, car il écrivait à une époque où les distinctions nécessaires n'étaient pas encore apparues inéluctables.)'.<sup>880</sup> Nietzsche was used as a reference to justify the primacy of the human person from an atheist standpoint: in the extract quoted, Nietzsche argued that the aim

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<sup>874</sup> Rougemont, 'Alexandre Marc et l'invention du personnalisme', 61.

<sup>875</sup> Nietzsche and Péguy have the same number of entries in the name index, *L'Ordre Nouveau* (vol. \*, 5 vols., reprint by the Fondation Emile Chanoux, Aoste, 1997), 431. On Péguy, see 'Textes de doctrine et d'action', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 11 (15 May 1934), inside back cover (iii).

<sup>876</sup> Christian Roy, 'Emmanuel Mounier, Alexandre Marc et les origines du personnalisme', in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L'actualité d'un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l'UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 29-30; Roy, 'Révolution et Révélation: Arnaud Dandieu entre Nietzsche et Jésus', 199-230.

<sup>877</sup> E.g. Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire* (2nd edn. Paris, 1993), 52.

<sup>878</sup> *Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Nov. 1933), iii.

<sup>879</sup> *Ordre Nouveau*, 16 (15 Dec. 1934), iii.

<sup>880</sup> *Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Nov. 1933), iii.

of society and morality was the ‘individu souverain’, free and responsible, controlling himself and his destiny according to his conscience – and this, in the vocabulary of ON, was the ‘personne’.<sup>881</sup>

Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu drew on new research in anthropology and ethnology to prove that human beings had a spiritual faculty besides rational and instinctive acts. Following the philosopher of science Emile Meyerson, and the phenomenological physician Eugène Minkowski, who related scientific theories with ethnological research, Dandieu emphasised that non-intellectual and non-quantifiable activity was vital.<sup>882</sup> Drawing some political and social consequences of Marcel Mauss’s ‘Essai sur le don’, Dandieu developed the distinction between mechanical labour and creative work and called for a system in which each person could freely give him/herself in creative work.<sup>883</sup> That the economy was to be built on the ‘gift’ could either be interpreted in the line of Marcel Mauss’s anthropology (viewing the gift as a sign of power and prestige), or in a Christian sense (as a form of self-surrender).

The personalism of ON was ambivalent vis-à-vis religion, not only because the doctrine could be interpreted either in secular or in religious terms, but also because most of its proponents had a dual attitude. In 1933, Rougemont wrote: ‘Il n’y a de rupture possible qu’au nom de l’Evangile.’<sup>884</sup> Like Rougemont, Alexandre Marc had come to envisage Christianity and revolution as proceeding from one and the same source, and this could only be suspect for both Catholic authorities and non-Christian revolutionaries.<sup>885</sup> Marc was aware of the difficulty of reconciling Nietzschean philosophy with his defence of the Catholic

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<sup>881</sup> *Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Nov. 1933), iii.

<sup>882</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 247. I wish to thank Christian Roy for his translations from this text and for the following reference on Meyerson, historian of chemistry turned philosopher of science, who identified irrational practices in both ‘primitive’ medicine-men and modern scientists: Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos, ‘Emile Meyerson and his contemporaries. Comments on a bibliography’, *The Jerusalem philosophical quarterly*, 52 (July 2003), 245-54.

<sup>883</sup> See Roy, ‘Transpositions of Mauss’ theory of the gift in the personalist social critique of Arnaud Dandieu’, 177-89.

<sup>884</sup> Rougemont’s contribution to the special issue ‘Rupture entre l’ordre chrétien et le désordre établi’, *Esprit*, 6 (March 1933) in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 102.

<sup>885</sup> See for example the attack on the ON, and the classic presentation of Catholicism as the opposite of a revolution, in N.D.L.R. ‘Polémique cordiale – L’Ordre Nouveau’, *Mouvements*, 9 (June 1933), 1.



Church, from 1933 onwards.<sup>886</sup> To reconcile religion and revolution was ground-breaking at the time, especially in France.

Rougemont and Daniel-Rops are good examples of a dual attitude. When writing in the name of ON, they insisted on the non-confessional character of personalism; but at the same time, in their own writings, they suggested that only a (particular) Christian approach was valid. In July 1933, Daniel-Rops and Rougemont officially defended the non-confessional character of ON.<sup>887</sup> Against allegations that ON was actually defending Christian values under the guise of its motto 'spirituel d'abord', they emphasised that ON had a secular understanding of 'spirituel': 'cet adjectif qualifie l'acte personnel'.<sup>888</sup> They were adamant in distinguishing ON from any confusion with Christian thought: 'aucune confusion non plus, entre le spirituel chrétien et notre personnalisme. Le spirituel de *l'Ordre Nouveau* veut être humain et rien qu'humain.'<sup>889</sup> Thus, even though some of the ON members were Christian, the motto 'spirituel d'abord' did not refer to the Holy Spirit (as P.O. Lapie had written in *Mouvements*), but to human politics: 'C'est donc faire le plus grand tort au christianisme de certains membres de *l'Ordre Nouveau* que de leur attribuer une confession entre le spirituel, tel que nous venons de le définir, et le Saint-Esprit dont parle la théologie, réalité qui, pour le chrétien, reste d'un ordre radicalement hétérogène à tout ordre terrestre.'<sup>890</sup>

The spiritual revolution of ON was defined without reference to the transcendent, and thus, 'il ne s'agit pas ici de transcender le plan humain, la condition humaine.'<sup>891</sup> The subtle reference to Malraux's *Condition humaine* (1933) shows Rougemont's concern with *engagement* in literature.<sup>892</sup> Like Malraux, Rougemont supported a literature at the service of

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<sup>886</sup> See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 200.

<sup>887</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 13-17. This was an implicit response to N.D.L.R. 'Polémique cordiale – *L'Ordre Nouveau*', *Mouvements*, 9 (June 1933), 1.

<sup>888</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 14.

<sup>889</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 15.

<sup>890</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 15.

<sup>891</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 15.

<sup>892</sup> This account of a failed rising in China describes the contradictions of human existence, both vile and beautiful. Extracts of *La Condition humaine* were published in *NRF* and *Marianne*, and in 1933 the novel was published in full by Gallimard. It won the Goncourt Prize.

revolution.<sup>893</sup> When he wrote for ON, he was serving the personalist revolution, which was necessarily non-confessional. Personally however, Rougemont affirmed his difference from non-religious personalists: ‘Je ne saurais croire pourtant à l’efficacité d’une foi en l’homme fondée sur l’homme seul’.<sup>894</sup> Rougemont professed: ‘L’Esprit auquel je crois est justement celui que l’homme ne peut connaître, sinon en lui obéissant. C’est l’Esprit qu’il ne peut connaître que lorsqu’il en reçoit un ordre, une vocation, et qu’il exécute cet ordre.’<sup>8</sup> Rougemont accepted a non-confessional understanding of ‘spirituel’, but ‘l’Esprit’ was a radically different reality.<sup>896</sup> Unlike *Esprit*, ON personalists made a clear difference between ‘spirituel’ and ‘Esprit’. ON was more coherent than *Esprit* in referring to ‘spirituel’ as the opposite of ‘matériel’ (whilst ‘l’Esprit’ was reserved strictly for theological purposes).

## Religious and non-religious approaches to ‘vocation’

Ordre Nouveau argued that each human being had a vocation in the broad sense, or, according to Rougemont, in a strict religious sense. Understood in a secular sense, vocation was an equivalent of personal destiny: ‘Nous croyons que la vocation de l’homme ne peut se réaliser que dans la famille, la région, le métier, la nation, la communauté, la conscience d’un destin personnel.’<sup>897</sup> ON shared these views on the roots of the person with most of the French right. Yet unlike the right, ON emphasised the inherent freedom of each human being: ‘Chaque être humain a sa vocation propre dont il est le seul juge.’<sup>898</sup>

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<sup>893</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, ‘Spirituel d’abord’, 16.

<sup>894</sup> Introduction (1934) to Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 26.

<sup>895</sup> Quoting Calvin: ‘*Omnis recta cognitio Dei ab obedientia nascitur*’ (*Institutio religionis christianae*), in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 60-1.

<sup>896</sup> Rougemont concluded: ‘L’Esprit dont nous parlons n’est pas une espèce de fluide très subtil, d’autant plus respectable qu’il serait plus invisible. Et ce n’est pas non plus l’intelligence, ni la pensée, ni les fameuses « valeurs spirituelles » dont le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle a fait une véritable inflation. Mais c’est l’Esprit qui vient *s’incarner* parmi nous. L’Esprit est autorité, disait Rimbaud. Ou il n’est rien.’ Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 61. (The emphasis is his own).

<sup>897</sup> See the collective issue ‘Nous voulons...’, ‘III. Notre foi. 2. La vocation de l’homme’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 8.

<sup>898</sup> ‘Nous voulons...’, ‘III. Notre foi. 2. La vocation de l’homme’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 8.

The philosophical and psychological understanding of vocation at ON was partly drawn from German philosopher William Stern,<sup>899</sup> who developed a theory of ‘critical personalism’, calling for a holistic approach to the person.<sup>900</sup> Alexandre Marc acknowledged the link between the personalism that he developed in France and Stern’s personalism: ‘le personnalisme français et le "personnalisme" de William Stern se rencontrent et se croisent dans un accord complet’.<sup>901</sup> The understanding of the person as vocation (not as a given) was a point of convergence between French and German personalists.

Unsurprisingly, with his Calvinist background, Rougemont particularly developed the appreciation of the person as vocation. In his own works (unlike in *L’Ordre Nouveau*), he expressed a religious understanding of vocation. In *Politique de la personne*, Rougemont put forth a strict Calvinist interpretation of vocation: ‘La vocation est un appel, une mission confiée à un homme, – une parole que Dieu lui adresse.’<sup>902</sup> To the objection that this made no sense for the non-believer, Rougemont responded that each and everyone was called by God, and that there were many secular people who believed in their mission, only ‘ils l’appellent leur dignité.’<sup>903</sup> Consistent with ON principles, Rougemont stated that Christian and atheist interpretations of ‘vocation’ were compatible.

In Rougemont’s view, having a concrete vocation liberated one from economic and social determinism. Rougemont contrasted personalism with other political theories, which he despised for their (alleged) belief in fate, be it economic or historical determinism, or simply state governance: ‘Le banquier croit aux fatalités du Capital. Le bourgeois croit aux fatalités

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<sup>899</sup> William Stern (1871-1938) was a psychologist and a philosopher, famous for his contribution to the concepts of applied psychology and intellectual quotient. He focused on the distinction person/thing, introduced to overcome the behaviourist scheme of stimulus/response. He established a ‘critical personalism’, explicitly against the ‘naïve’ personalism of theistic religion. See William Stern, *Person und Sache. System des kritischen Personalismus* (Leipzig, 1923). Although Stern did not found a school of personalism, he has had a durable influence, in particular through Edith Stein (his student, whose research on empathy was marked by Stern) and through the philosophy of symbolic forms of Ernst Cassirer (his colleague in Hamburg, 1919-33).

<sup>900</sup> On Alexandre Marc and philosophical transfer from German authors (including Scheler, Stern, Werfel, Rosenstock and Przywara), see Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 231-43.

<sup>901</sup> See article signed René Dupuis but most likely written by Alexandre Marc (according to Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 80.), René Dupuis, ‘Le "Personnalisme" de William Stern et la jeunesse française’, *Revue d’Allemagne* (5 April 1933), 311-30.

<sup>902</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 57.

<sup>903</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 58.

de l'Opinion Publique. Le communiste croit aux fatalités de l'Histoire. Et tous croient, comme le fasciste, aux fatalités de l'Etat. Nous croyons à la liberté de la Personne.<sup>904</sup> Rougemont wrote: 'Avoir un destin propre, *une vocation*, c'est la seule manière que les hommes aient jamais pu concevoir d'être libres. Tel est le sens de notre personnalisme. [...] Toute la doctrine de l'Ordre Nouveau tient dans ces quelques mots : *le destin particulier de chaque homme est plus grand que tous les « destins du siècle » inventés par nos lâchetés.*'<sup>905</sup> Here, Rougemont was particularly aiming at *Destin du siècle*, an essay by the Socialist writer Jean-Richard Bloch.<sup>906</sup> More generally however, Rougemont used the concept of vocation to affirm the inherent dignity and freedom of each human being.

The spiritual revolution of ON – 'spirituel d'abord' – opposed the 'précédence ou primauté de l'économique dans le marxisme' (to quote the title of a chapter from *Politique de la personne*).<sup>907</sup> This was a restrictive interpretation of Marxism. 'Quand nous disons *spirituel d'abord*, *ce d'abord* n'a pas le même sens temporel, historique, que dans l'économique *d'abord* des marxistes. [Rougemont is referring to the transitory period in Marxist thought.] Il a un sens de primauté non pas chronologique et transitoire, mais absolue. Primauté éternelle et non pas temporelle.'<sup>908</sup> It was a personalist contention that both capitalism and Marxism dealt exclusively with materialist constraints and objectives. However, whilst rejecting materialism, ON remained wary of a duality between mind and matter: 'L'esprit ne saurait désigner que la totalité créatrice de l'homme, corps et intelligence, indissolublement, *en acte.*'<sup>909</sup> This brings us to the economic dimension of the ON theory.

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<sup>904</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Destin du siècle ou destin de l'homme?' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 11 (15 May 1934), 4.

<sup>905</sup> Rougemont, 'Destin du siècle ou destin de l'homme?' 3. The emphasis is his own.

<sup>906</sup> This essay was published in 1931, before Bloch became a Communist. See esp. the preface by Michel Trebitsch in Jean-Richard Bloch, *Destin du siècle* (2nd edn. Paris, 1996).

<sup>907</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 63-75.

<sup>908</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 74.

<sup>909</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'La révolution nécessaire par Robert Aron et Arnaud Dandieu', *Les Cahiers du sud*, 162 (Jun. 1934), 388.

## 2. 'Then the economic'

Ordre Nouveau proposed the replacement of the capitalist and parliamentary democratic nation-state with a socio-economic and political federalism, aimed at restoring human scale to communities. The ON economic approach combined emphasis on the spiritual with reference to technology, thanks to the participation of 'techniciens' from the Ecole Polytechnique, from January 1934 onwards. The combination of the spiritual and precise economic devises means that ON transcended the cleavage drawn by Oliver Dard, between 'nouvelles relèves spiritualistes' and 'réalistes'.<sup>910</sup> Unlike *Esprit* and the 'Jeune Droite', ON had concrete proposals for the social-reorganisation of labour.

### A necessary economic revolution?

The economic theory of ON can be found in three main sources: *La Révolution nécessaire*, the last joint book of Aron and Dandieu; the journal *L'Ordre Nouveau*; and the newsletter, *Bulletin de liaison des groupes 'Ordre Nouveau'*, published between 1935 and 1937.<sup>911</sup> A central tenet of ON economic theory was that capitalism was a source of disorder and an obstacle to personal freedom. The damages of capitalism were manifest in the proletarian condition (defined as the modern form of slavery following Marx and Proudhon) and in productivism (the view that the finality of gains in productivity is to produce more, without regard for the workers – and one could add: for the environment, although this was the concern of the Gascon personalists and not of ON in the 1930s).<sup>912</sup> Productivism was the

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<sup>910</sup> Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, esp. 163-7, 243-5, 265-7.

<sup>911</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*. (First edition 1934); Christian Roy has studied the ON conception of participative enterprise and its practical experiments in social labour sharing, on the basis of the internal newsletter of the ON, *Bulletin de liaison des groupes "Ordre Nouveau"*, a source never analysed before. Christian Roy, 'French personalist case studies of participation in the enterprise and social labor sharing in the *Ordre Nouveau* newsletter (1935-37)', Paper presented at the 11th annual European Business Ethics Network conference (unpublished), Centrum voor Economie en Ethiek, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 9-11 Sept. 1998.

<sup>912</sup> For a definition of 'productivisme', see Daniel-Rops, 'Le travail et l'esprit', 7 (Jan. 1934), 8. On Gascon personalism, see below.

<sup>913</sup> See esp. René Dupuis, 'Misère de l'étatisme économique', 1 (May 1933), 31-2.

common ideology of liberal capitalism and Soviet communism.<sup>913</sup> It was against productivism and to end the proletarian condition that ON developed its economic and social doctrine.

In *La Révolution nécessaire*, Aron and Dandieu put forth three main motives for a revolution: callous neglect of the person in modern society (people were reduced to economic agents whose goal was to produce and to consume); the deceit of ideologies (Marxism led to obsessive organisation of industry and, instead of suppressing the state, orchestrated statolatry); and finally, the alienation of manual work (the obsession with productivity: ‘*Il n’y a pas de pire ennemi de la joie au travail que la religion du travail*’).<sup>914</sup> Their economic theory was based on a ‘fonction dichotomique’, which Aron later defined as a double-sided understanding of human activity:

Toute activité humaine, tout travail humain, individuel ou social, comporte deux parts [...]. D’abord la part mécanisée, devenue automatique, où sont enregistrés les résultats de toutes les recherches antérieures, constituant l’acquis de la civilisation. Ensuite, les activités neuves et libres, qui s’exercent dans le sens de la recherche, de la découverte, de l’aventure, de la création. [...] L’équilibre entre les deux parts de l’activité humaine, évitant les confusions, n’empêche pas une hiérarchie d’exister entre les deux zones, celle de l’automatisme et celle de la liberté. La seconde constitue l’aboutissement, la raison d’être de la première, qui ne doit lui servir que de point d’appui.<sup>915</sup>

The last sentence explains why Mounier and *Esprit* could accuse ON of a latent contempt for manual work.<sup>916</sup> However, I argue that the point of the dichotomic function was to give an innovative answer to the proletarian condition.

In *La Révolution nécessaire*, Aron and Dandieu were adamant that the proletarian condition could be abolished thanks to a new distribution of labour through a ‘civilian service’, the maximum development of mechanisation to cover unskilled tasks, and the organisation of producers’ cooperatives.<sup>917</sup> Arnaud Dandieu distinguished two types of labour,

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<sup>914</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 225. On the deceit of the moral value of work in general, see Albert Ollivier and Louis Ollivier, ‘La valeur morale du travail’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 20 (May 1935).

<sup>915</sup> Aron, *Fragments d’une vie*, 97.

<sup>916</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>917</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 220-68.

which in turn divided the economy into two sectors. As defined by ON in March 1934: ‘Deux sortes de travail : Le travail automatique, machinal, quantitatif ou disqualifié, qui ne comporte aucune initiative et aucun engagement personnel. Il est essentiellement prolétarien. Le travail d’artisan, de technicien ou d’artiste, humain, qualifié et créateur qui procure à l’homme une satisfaction directe. Aux deux sortes de travail correspondent deux sortes de production, l’une planée, l’autre libre.’<sup>918</sup> Alexandre Marc aimed at the replacement of wage labour (i.e. selling one’s work randomly on the market) by free associations of skilled workers. He devoted lengthy analysis to the theory of the participative enterprise from the mid-1930s onwards.<sup>919</sup>

From 1934 onwards, the ON team (with the notable exception of Rougemont, as we shall see below) developed the socio-economic dimensions of personalism.<sup>920</sup> ON imagined a complete set of socio-economic arrangements: the free sector of the economy would be based on the participative enterprise, a free association of skilled workers (whether entrepreneurs, technicians or artisans); in the planned sector of the economy, largely producing goods of primary necessity, unskilled labour would be left to be performed by contingents of a ‘service civil’.<sup>921</sup> This civilian service was a form of conscription aimed at abolishing the proletarian condition by relieving any single class from repetitive tasks, perceived as dehumanising. The progress of automation, far from being the cause of structural unemployment, would allow a steady decrease in the amount of unskilled work. The residual unskilled work would be carried out evenly by all citizens through the scheme of the civilian service. I submit that

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<sup>918</sup> ‘Nous voulons... L’Ordre Nouveau’, ‘Définitions’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 29 (15 March 1934), III.

<sup>919</sup> See the excellent analysis of Marc’s studies (esp. ‘L’entreprise humanisée’, *La Vie intellectuelle*, LI, 4 (Sept. 1937), 538-9) in Christian Roy, ‘Some personalist theories of the enterprise and related experiments in France in the 1930s’, Paper presented at the Annual joint seminar of the Von Hügel Institute of Cambridge University and the Centrum voor Economie en Ethiek of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (unpublished), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 16 May 1997.

<sup>920</sup> Besides ‘Le problème du travail’ *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 7 (15 Jan. 1934); see ‘De la Corporation’ (contributions of Robert Aron, Robert Gibrat and Robert Loustau, René Dupuis and Alexandre Marc), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 10 (15 Apr. 1934); ‘De la banque à l’escroquerie’, (Robert Aron, Francis Boland, Jacques Dalbon, René Dupuis and Alexandre Marc), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 12 (15 June 1934); ‘De la propriété’ (R. Gibrat and R. Loustau, D. Ardouint [Jean Jardin] and A. Marc, E. Minkowski, C. Chevalley, E. Hélice, R. Dupuis and E. Pillias), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 16 (15 Dec. 1934); ‘Comment sortir du capitalisme?’ (Daniel-Rops, René Dupuis, Robert Aron), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 21 (15 June 1935); ‘Planisme et Plan’ (Alexandre Marc, E. Hélice, Xavier de Lignac, René Dupuis), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 22-23 (July-Aug. 1935) ‘Du Prolétariat’ (C. Chevalley, A. Marc, R. Aron and A. Ollivier, and R. Dupuis), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 25 (15 Nov. 1935); ‘Du mouvement coopératif’ (Fernand Prévot, X. de Lignac et A. Ollivier, E. Hélice, P. David, R. Dupuis), *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 28 (15 Feb. 1934);

<sup>921</sup> See esp. Roy, ‘French personalist case studies of participation in the enterprise and social labor sharing in the *Ordre Nouveau* newsletter (1935-37)’.

Dandieu's theory of the 'service civil' is likely to go down as the most original contribution of ON to the history of ideas.

A counterpart to the civilian service was the 'vital minimum' guaranteed to all by the state ('Minimum Social Garanti' or MSG). This basic income would satisfy primary needs in food, clothing and accommodation. The planned sector of the economy would produce these basic goods to ensure their availability to all. The aim was to dissociate reward (or salary) from the satisfaction of basic needs. One could object that since needs are relative, the plan for a basic income ('minimum vital') would remain arbitrary, no matter how carefully planned. However, ON economics were fundamentally optimistic: 'Les moyens de production actuels permettent facilement d'arracher tout le monde à la misère. Il ne s'agit pas de faire bénéficier quelques uns d'une aumône humiliante, d'un secours de chômage philanthropique et démoralisant : il s'agit de faire que *tous* bénéficient des avantages du machinisme.'<sup>922</sup> Such confidence in economic progress was shared by many 'technocrats' in the 1930s.<sup>923</sup> The idea of a 'minimum vital' was popularised by Daniel-Rops in *Ce qui meurt et ce qui naît* (1937), for a largely Catholic readership. And after the Second World War, Alexandre Marc and Robert Aron were particularly active in developing the concept of MSG and the ideal of self-management of the enterprise.<sup>924</sup>

From January 1934, following the ON 'Appel aux techniciens', some alumni of the Ecole Polytechnique (from the group X-Crise, after the nickname of the school: 'L'X') developed the technicalities of the civilian service in *L'Ordre Nouveau*.<sup>925</sup> In a dry note, Robert Gibrat stated that the proletarian condition could be abolished if each citizen

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<sup>922</sup> 'Le droit de vivre pour chacun', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 20.

<sup>923</sup> Thus the ON economic plans show that the line between 'nouvelles relèves spiritualistes' and 'nouvelles relèves réalistes', analysed by Olivier Dard, was blurred. Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*.

<sup>924</sup> See Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)', 473-83.

<sup>925</sup> The issue of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 7 (15 Jan. 1934) was entitled: 'Appel aux techniciens. Comment se posent les problèmes techniques. Le problème du travail.' It included the contributions of two Polytechnicians : Robert Gibrat and Robert Loustau.



accomplished twelve months of ‘travail servile’ in his life.<sup>926</sup> Robert Loustau illustrated this theory with the example of the mining industry.<sup>927</sup> In 1935, a ‘Bureau d’Etudes pour le Service Civil’ at ON worked out the practicalities of the implementation of a civilian service and contacted entrepreneurs for a two-week long experiment.<sup>928</sup> The aim was to allow the replacement of unskilled workers in factories, so as to grant them paid holidays – this was before the Popular Front instituted them – and prove that the condition of the proletariat could be changed.

A prototype of the civilian service was implemented in the summer of 1935.<sup>9</sup> Approximately forty students and ON volunteers ‘took the place, but not the pay’, in the words of Christian Roy, of as many unskilled workers in four factories of Beauvais and Paris (paper, car, brush and carpet industries).<sup>930</sup> The experience was a success: many of the workers took the first vacation in their working life; and the volunteers managed to keep up the same output for the firms.<sup>931</sup> A tract entitled ‘La relève du travail’ claimed: ‘Au cours de l’été 1935, une première expérience a été tentée avec succès dans quelques usines situées dans la région parisienne et dans la banlieue de Beauvais. « La France est un des seuls pays où l’ouvrier et l’ouvrière n’ont pas de vacances payées. Sacrifiez quelques jours de vos vacances pour en donner à ceux qui n’en ont jamais. »’<sup>932</sup> Plans were made to repeat the experience in the summer of 1936.

In June 1936, massive strikes demanding the implementation of the Popular Front social laws succeeded in making two weeks of paid vacations mandatory, thus removing

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<sup>926</sup> Robert Gibrat, ‘L’organisation du Service Civil’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 7.

<sup>927</sup> Robert Loustau, ‘Un exemple concret: la mine’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 7 (15 Jan. 1934).

<sup>928</sup> See *L’Ordre Nouveau* special issue ‘Une première expérience de service civil. La relève du travail’, 20 (1 May 1935), esp. R. Gibrat and R. Loustau ‘L’Organisation du service civil’, 13-16.

<sup>929</sup> See the account in Albert Ollivier, ‘Où nous en sommes?’ *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 24 (15 Oct. 1935), 25-9.

<sup>930</sup> The numbers vary: ‘une soixantaine’ in Ollivier, ‘Où nous en sommes?’ 26.; fifty in Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l’ingénieur au prophète*, 124; and Roy, ‘Some personalist theories of the enterprise and related experiments in France in the 1930s’. Forty is more likely, see Robert Aron, ‘Notre expérience de service civil’, *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Oct. 1935); Roy, ‘French personalist case studies of participation in the enterprise and social labor sharing in the *Ordre Nouveau* newsletter (1935-37)’.

<sup>931</sup> Aron, ‘Notre expérience de service civil’.

<sup>932</sup> This tract may have been written by Rougemont. Archives Rougemont, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, ‘Dossier O.N., Bulletins et coupures de presse’.

much of the impetus for taking over workers' tasks (beyond testing out the civilian service's premise that any citizen could learn them on the job). Although everything was ready for the summer of 1936, ON gave up the project.<sup>933</sup> The single experience of civilian service, in the summer of 1935, remained the only concrete public manifestation of the ON revolution.

## Rougemont and the economic revolution

As noted above, Rougemont contributed little to the socio-economic research of ON. Admittedly, he wrote the first article of *L'Ordre Nouveau* on an economic question: 'Liberté ou chômage?'<sup>934</sup> and he published a book on the condition of an 'intellectuel en chômage', which he experienced from 1933 to 1935, following the liquidation of the 'Editions Je Sers'.<sup>935</sup> In an article published in *Esprit* in July 1933, Rougemont also expanded on the theme of 'Loisir ou temps vide?'.<sup>936</sup> Rougemont disagreed with the common opposition of work defined as 'forcé' and leisure defined as free time.<sup>937</sup> Thomas Keller has showed that this paralleled the conception of free and creative time of Werfel and Rosenstock, even though Rougemont was only aware of their research through the interpretation of Alexandre Marc.<sup>938</sup> Rougemont argued that both work and leisure should aim at creation.<sup>939</sup> With unemployment – forced free time, as it were, the contrast between work as forced and leisure as free time was made obsolete.

Nevertheless, Rougemont was more interested by cultural and moral issues than by economic and social matters. His *Journal d'un intellectuel en chômage* is more about culture

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<sup>933</sup> On Jean Coutrot's role in preparing the civilian service 1936, see Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète*, 124-6.

<sup>934</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Liberté ou chômage?' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 1 (May 1933).

<sup>935</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Journal d'un intellectuel en chômage* (1st edn. Paris, 1937).

<sup>936</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Loisir ou temps vide?' *Esprit*, 10 (July 1933), 604-8.

<sup>937</sup> He deliberately wrote 'vide' in the eighteenth century spelling 'vuide'.

<sup>938</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 245-7. (Translation: Christian Roy)

<sup>939</sup> Rougemont, 'Loisir ou temps vide?' 607.

and the role of the writer than about unemployment and the economy.<sup>940</sup> It is based on the following paradox: an intellectual has to be unemployed for an ‘existential’ analysis of unemployment, and yet, technically, the intellectual, whose activity is to reflect and speak out on public issues, can never be out of work.<sup>941</sup> The *Journal d’un intellectuel en chômage* was part of a general trend whereby ‘unemployed persons became the heirs of the moral economy and thereby challenged fundamental values’ of capitalism.<sup>942</sup> Rougemont repeated the ON economic slogans, and emphasised that the economic revolution had a moral purpose.<sup>943</sup> Wealth was but a means (to be free to respond to a particular calling), and Rougemont celebrated frugality: ‘POUR VIVRE DE PEU. – (Avoir peu)’.<sup>944</sup> The *Journal* offered a picturesque account of the life of an unemployed writer; it did not seek to solve the problem of unemployment.

Besides his ‘Liberté ou chômage?’, Rougemont published only one article on an economic subject in *L’Ordre Nouveau*: ‘Historique du mal capitaliste’ with René Dupuis (for the January 1937 issue on ‘Capital et Capitalisme’).<sup>945</sup> The approach in terms of civilisation led Dupuis and Rougemont to draw a conventional indictment against the social consequences of capitalism.<sup>946</sup> Except for those two relatively minor articles, Rougemont abstained from socio-economic debate in *L’Ordre Nouveau*. In June 1934, Marc reproached him with not contributing to their research on ‘Corporation’ (the ON economic system).<sup>947</sup> It is not because

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<sup>940</sup> One may refer to Ackermann for more details on this *Journal*: Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 409-443.

<sup>941</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d’un intellectuel*, esp. 61-2.

<sup>942</sup> Michael Seidman, ‘Making the French unemployed work, 1930-1936’, *French history*, 18, 2 (2004), 196.

<sup>943</sup> ‘Le but concret de la révolution économique que je crois moralement nécessaire, et d’ailleurs techniquement possible, c’est d’accorder à tout homme, quel qu’il soit, le « minimum vital » qui lui permette d’obéir à sa vocation.’ Rougemont, *Journal d’un intellectuel*, 83.

<sup>944</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d’un intellectuel*, 210.

<sup>945</sup> Denis de Rougemont and René Dupuis, ‘Historique du mal capitaliste’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 37 (Jan. 1937), 1-13.

<sup>946</sup> In conclusion the authors recapitulated: ‘Ainsi le capitalisme a brisé les rapports humains au sein de la communauté ; il a créé une nouvelle forme d’esclavage, le prolétariat salarié ; il a provoqué des réactions « collectives » ou « totalitaires » également inhumaines et désespérées ; enfin il a largement contribué à la dissolution de l’unité européenne en ces morceaux d’Empire Romain que sont les états-nations, incapables de trouver une forme de vie commune et féconde.’ Rougemont and Dupuis, ‘Historique du mal capitaliste’, 13.

<sup>947</sup> ‘[...] en décembre, « Le crédit corporatif » (n° très important qui achèvera les grandes lignes de l’édifice corporatif ; à ce propos, tu n’as jamais dit mot de notre étude sur la Corporation).’ Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

he was away from Paris between the summer of 1933 and the Autumn of 1936, when ‘technical’ issues were extensively discussed, that Rougemont abstained. He did publish in *L’Ordre Nouveau* during this period, but his attention focussed on political or cultural matters.

The list of themes of all the articles that Rougemont published in *L’Ordre Nouveau* between 1933 and 1938 proves his disinterest in economic issues.<sup>948</sup> After his ‘Liberté ou chômage?’, Rougemont wrote articles against communism (particularly targeting communist intellectuals);<sup>949</sup> against the French Socialist Party and socialism in general;<sup>950</sup> against the French parliament;<sup>951</sup> against determinism and for personal responsibilities;<sup>952</sup> on French politics both current and past;<sup>953</sup> on revolution, with particular reference to the French Revolution, the Soviet Revolution and Nazi Germany;<sup>954</sup> on the Nazi celebration of war and the international policy of non-intervention;<sup>955</sup> on political theory (especially with regard to authority and legitimacy);<sup>956</sup> and on the themes of culture, literature and the responsibility of intellectuals.<sup>957</sup>

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<sup>948</sup> The book reviews are not mentioned here.

<sup>949</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Légion étrangère soviétique', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 2 (June 1933), 19-23.

<sup>950</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Du socialisme au fascisme', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 35 (15 Nov. 1936), 18-22; Denis de Rougemont, 'Ni Droite ni gauche, IV- Pourquoi ils sont Socialistes', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 4 (Oct. 1933).

<sup>951</sup> Denis de Rougemont and Jean Jardin, 'Les parlementaires contre le Parlement', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 4 (Oct. 1933), 7-9.

<sup>952</sup> Rougemont, 'Destin du siècle ou destin de l'homme?' 3-7; Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, 'Spirituel d'abord', 13-17.

<sup>953</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'L'Etat contre l'Esprit. L'Edit de Nantes et sa Révocation', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 19 (15 March- 1 Apr. 1935), 29-33; Denis de Rougemont, 'Où en est la France?' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 24 (15 Oct. 1935), 1-7; Denis de Rougemont, 'Plans de réforme', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 14 (15 Oct. 1934), 15-22.

<sup>954</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Communauté révolutionnaire', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 8 (15 Feb. 1934), 14-18; Denis de Rougemont, 'Les Jacobins en chemise brune', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 36 (15 Dec. 1936), 1-6; Denis de Rougemont, 'Un exemple de tactique révolutionnaire chez Lénine', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 17 (Jan. 1935), 9-12.

<sup>955</sup> 'Conversation avec un S.A.' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 26 (15 Dec. 1935), 38-42; Denis de Rougemont, 'Ballet de la non-intervention', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 39 (1 Apr. 1937), 41-4; Denis de Rougemont, 'A propos d'une conversation avec un S.A.' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 27 (15 Jan. 1936), 48.

<sup>956</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Plébiscite et démocratie', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 21-5; Denis de Rougemont, 'Qu'est-ce que l'Autorité?' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 31 (15 May 1936), 2-5; Denis de Rougemont, 'Qu'est-ce que la Politique?' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 32 (15 June 1936), 1-10; Denis de Rougemont and Claude Chevalley, 'L'Autorité assure les libertés', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 40 (1 May 1937), 42-50.

<sup>957</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Et Rimbaud? La littérature rajeunit', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 27 (15 Jan. 1936), 47-8; Rougemont, 'Légion étrangère soviétique'; Denis de Rougemont, 'Précisions utiles sur l'industrie (/la fabrication) des navets', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 31 (15 March 1936), 10-15; Denis de Rougemont, 'Quatre indications pour une culture personnaliste', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 18 (Feb. 1935), 13-16; Denis de Rougemont, 'Responsabilité des intellectuels. Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent !' *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 42 (1 June 1938), 19-22.

Rougemont's identification with the literary world, his quest for political commitment, and his relative neglect for economic issues were normal among intellectuals in the 1930s. It was the ON group which showed an unusual concern for economics. ON put economic and social reforms before political change. Following Marxists and 'technocrats', ON made politics depend on social and economic structures.

### **3. *'The political at its service'***

The ON political theory was an endeavour to renew French political thought, a task which had European-wide ambitions from the beginning. Against the model of the centralised nation-state – considered too small for contemporary challenges and too large for the personal commitment of each – ON promoted a European federation based on regions. Federalism, for ON, was the type of government in which several regions (not states) constitute a political unity, while remaining relatively independent with regard to their internal affairs. The region or 'la petite patrie' was roughly defined by the sentimental attachment to one's native landscape; it was said to be natural, as opposed to the artificial construct of states. A group of regions formed a broader cultural unit, 'la nation culturelle', which was necessarily open to the universal. Thus, ON sought to oppose nationalism, although paradoxically, as I shall emphasise, the universal 'nation culturelle' may be looked upon as a variation of French nationalism. This section seeks to show why and how ON thought that a federalist state, limited to administrative functions, provided the best conditions for the person to be politically free and responsible.

The ON federalism has been the subject of articles and militant reports, besides the three doctoral dissertations cited already. John Loughlin, in an article in English, has attempted a critical assessment of 'French personalist and federalist movements in the interwar period', suggesting that their 'critique of the liberal nation-state is no more than a

regurgitation of traditional conservatism with a dose of Proudhonian anarchism thrown in'.<sup>9</sup> This remains to be argued, and Loughlin does not draw on a single primary source for the period preceding 1945.<sup>959</sup> Referring to primary sources has been made easy since the complete reprint of *L'Ordre Nouveau* in 1997. Obviously, to recover a sense of the ON efforts towards a coherent doctrine in the 1930s, one has to focus on history rather than the possible contemporary applications of federalist personalism. And in this perspective, Marc Heim's preface to the reprint of *L'Ordre Nouveau* is disappointing.<sup>960</sup> European federalists regularly organise colloquia on the federalism of ON, with a view to nourishing a coherent federalist policy in our day.<sup>961</sup> For all their insights on Proudhonian and Hamiltonian traditions of federalism, they fail to grasp the key to the political theory of ON in the 1930s.

At the heart of the ON political theory, I submit, lays an endeavour to rethink the bases of political sovereignty. Against the notion of national sovereignty, embodied in the parliamentary regime of the Third Republic, ON appealed to the sovereignty of the person. Refusing any legitimacy to the national parliament and government led ON to reject all national political parties, and to repudiate international diplomacy. By examining successively the negative and positive reappraisal of sovereignty according to ON, I seek to show how ON was as much innovative as it was derivative of a French political tradition.

## **A triple negation of political thought**

In 1932, Robert Aron depicted the position of ON with a touch of irony: 'Nous ne sommes ni droite, ni gauche, mais s'il faut absolument nous situer en termes parlementaires, nous répéterons que nous sommes à mi-chemin entre l'extrême droite, et l'extrême gauche,

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<sup>958</sup> John Loughlin, 'French personalist and federalist movements in the interwar period', in Peter Stirk (ed.) *European unity in context, the interwar period* (London, 1989), 188-200, quote 194.

<sup>959</sup> In particular, the distinctions between the ON and *Esprit* are misleading. Loughlin repeats the view that Mounier was the creator of personalism, in Loughlin, 'French personalist and federalist movements in the interwar period', 196.

<sup>960</sup> Marc Heim, 'Préface: Actualité de "L'Ordre Nouveau"', *L'Ordre Nouveau* (Aoste, 1997).

<sup>961</sup> E.g. the proceedings of the Tübingen colloquium, one of the most serious endeavours in recent years, published as Ferdinand Kinsky and Franz Knipping (eds), *Le fédéralisme personnaliste aux sources de l'Europe de demain. Hommage à Alexandre Marc* (Baden-Baden, 1996).

par derrière le président, tournant le dos à l'assemblée.<sup>962</sup> *L'Ordre Nouveau* passed quickly over the scandals and affairs of the Republic – themes amply developed in the contemporary press – and focused on doctrine. It criticized parliamentarism, political parties, and the electoral system at the same time.

Criticizing the parliamentary system was nothing exceptional in interwar France, but Michel Trebitsch has argued that ON innovated in three ways.<sup>963</sup> Firstly, ON hoped to foster a 'common front' that would transcend the class struggle: ON was presented as an initiative of youth regardless of social conditions. Secondly, ON departed from the concept of political party: it could not convey the will of the people. Thirdly, it rejected the framework of the nation-state. Each negation requires closer examination: the transversal condemnation of French politics; the rejection of the principle of national sovereignty; and – as a corollary of the negation of national sovereignty – the critique of the nation-state and of the international principle of minority rights, as established by the peace settlements following the First World War.

### 1. Transversal condemnation of French politics

The transversal condemnation of politics, expressed in the 'neither right nor left' motto, has been famous in French political history since Loubet del Bayle's study of *Les Non-conformistes des années trente*.<sup>964</sup> The 'Ni droite ni gauche' issue of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, in October 1933, developed the theme of the uselessness of parliament and political parties: 'ce ne sont pas seulement les différents partis qui sont condamnables, c'est le parti en tant que forme d'organisation politique.'<sup>965</sup> There is no need to insist: ON generalised the critique of all political parties to the condemnation of the very concept of a political party.

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<sup>962</sup> Robert Aron, 'Questions posées', 'Cahier de revendications', *NRF*, 231 (Dec. 1932), 837.

<sup>963</sup> In Michel Trebitsch, 'Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le "Cahier de revendications" de décembre 1932', in Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l'Entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995), 212.

<sup>964</sup> Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années trente. Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (2nd edn. Paris, 2001). First edn. 1969.

<sup>965</sup> Claude Chevalley and Michel Glady, 'La mort des Partis', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 4 (Oct. 1933), 19.

Despite increasing polarization of politics both on the domestic and the international scenes, ON claimed to keep the ‘neither right, nor left’ line throughout the 1930s. Thus, ON refused the anti-fascist front, although well aware of the fascist threat.<sup>966</sup> Refusal to compromise led ON to reject the Popular Front: *L’Ordre Nouveau* called for abstention in the parliamentary elections of 1936.<sup>967</sup> ON members abstained on principle: they sought to rethink the bases of modern political thought from without.

## 2. Doctrinal questioning of parliamentary democracy

The structured character of ON attacks on the parliamentary system was largely the work of the former students of the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques: Alexandre Marc, Jean Jardin, and René Dupuis (who was the son of one of the directors of the school). Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was their key reference for condemning abuses of political sovereignty in centralised states.<sup>968</sup> ON also referred to Marx, Sorel and Maurras for condemnation of the parliamentary system.<sup>969</sup> ON federalism has been called Proudhonian. It is certain that the French anti-Jacobin tradition of federalism prevailed at ON, to the detriment of other traditions, such as American federalism.<sup>970</sup> The general critique of the parliamentary system

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<sup>966</sup> See more details in Chapter 6.

<sup>967</sup> See ‘Ne votez pas’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (Apr. 1936).

<sup>968</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65) was a French social theorist, political activist and journalist. Claiming to be the first person to adopt the label ‘anarchist’, he developed a vision of a cooperative society conducting its affairs by just exchanges and without political authority. While he is largely known in the English-speaking world as an exponent of libertarian socialism, his last writings advocated a federal State with minimal functions. *L’Ordre Nouveau* quoted from the following works of Proudhon: *Idée générale de la Révolution au XIXe siècle* (c.1851), *La révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d’Etat* (c1852), *De la justice et de la révolution et dans l’Eglise* (c1858), *Du Principe fédératif* (1863), *La capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (posthumous) and *Théorie de la propriété* (posthumous). Between 1923 and 1959, the complete works of Proudhon were being reissued by *Esprit* contributors Édouard Dolléans and Georges Duveau at the Librairie Marcel Rivière (Reproduced in 19 vols. by the Ed. Slatkine, Paris, 1982). For the references in *L’Ordre Nouveau*, see the index by Myriam Geay-Ouadia, *L’Ordre Nouveau* (Vol. \*, Fondation Emile Chanoux, Aoste, 1997), 431.

<sup>969</sup> See esp. article analysed below: Michel Gladly, ‘Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 8.

<sup>970</sup> I thank John Pinder for suggesting a possible misunderstanding between the Proudhonian tradition of federalism, taken up by Alexandre Marc in particular, and the liberal strand of Hamiltonian federalism. See his articles: John Pinder, ‘Alexandre Marc and Alexander Hamilton’, *L’Europe en formation*, ‘Hommage à Alexandre Marc’ (Spring 2001); John Pinder, ‘Citizens and rights as bases for the federal constitution’, in Ferdinand Kinsky and Franz Knipping (eds), *Le fédéralisme personnaliste aux sources de l’Europe de demain* (Baden-Baden, 1996); John Pinder, ‘Hamiltonian and Proudhonian federalists: synergy not conflict’, *The Federalist*, XXX, 2.



should be considered first; before looking at the more precise attacks on the French Third Republic; and finally showing that, strange though it may seem today, ON criticised parliamentary democracies for fear they may turn into ‘totalitarian’ dictatorships.

Unlike the great majority of political theorists since the Renaissance and the Reformation, the ON group did not seek to assess the means of representation of the people by the state. ON contrasted the reformists (or ‘réalistes’), who argued that an improvement of the electoral system, particularly a better calculation of the constituencies, would allow an accurate representation of the people. It held: ‘Plus le droit électoral est étendu, plus sont nombreuses les volontés personnelles, communales ou corporatives escamotées au profit du pouvoir central. Ce qui importe dans le pouvoir central ce n’est pas tant la façon dont il est recruté que la manière dont il exerce son pouvoir.’<sup>971</sup> This statement was written on the eve of the legislative elections of 26 April and 3 May 1936, which led to the historic victory of the Popular Front in France. The 15 April issue of *L’Ordre Nouveau* sought to take a distance from the events: Alexandre Marc explained why elections had little importance in the final analysis, while René Dupuis reflected upon various forms of sovereignty.

The main reason for personalists to reject parliamentary elections was that they tended to treat human questions in quantitative terms. In April 1936, Alexandre Marc (under his ON pseudonym Michel Glady) put forth his strongest argument against parliamentary democracy: adding up votes was not a recipe for a true statement of the people’s will.<sup>972</sup> Moreover, as political action was largely limited to voting in elections in Western democracies, the citizen ran the risk of imagining that dropping a piece of paper into a ballot box was enough to fulfil his personal responsibility in the running of public affairs.<sup>973</sup> In this way, citizens surrendered their personal rights and duties to the state, to a bureaucracy. The people had no means to control the parliament, which inevitably abused the concentration of power and lack of supervision. Marc concluded that Proudhon had been right: ‘la loi du nombre aboutit

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<sup>971</sup> ‘Du Parlementarisme’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 1.

<sup>972</sup> Glady, ‘Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme’, 8-14.

<sup>973</sup> It was ‘his responsibility’ since women did not have the vote until 1945 in France. Glady, ‘Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme’, 9.

inéluclablement au règne de l'incompétence.<sup>974</sup> The notion of 'compétence' was common in the antiparliamentarian discourse of the 1930s, and it owed much to theories of rationalised management during the Great War.<sup>975</sup> We shall see that for ON, 'competence' had to remain local, as much as possible. This was the basis for the principle of subsidiarity, underpinning federalism.

Quentin Skinner has established that modern political thought was founded on the opposition between two distinct theories of sovereignty in the Renaissance and the Reformation: the sovereignty of the state vs. the sovereignty of the people.<sup>976</sup> This had been understood by René Dupuis in 1936 already.<sup>977</sup> Dupuis regretted that the sovereignty of the people had been confused with that of the nation-state: 'rois et légistes sont parvenus, à la fin du XVe siècle, après trois cents ans de travail souterrain, à ériger en dogme, en postulat, en *tabou*, le principe suivant lequel toute souveraineté politique réside dans l'Etat-Nation et là seulement.'<sup>978</sup> Yet Dupuis's article was polemical, not historical. He attacked the theory of the sovereignty of the nation-state because he rejected its manifestations: centralisation, a compact territory, and cultural uniformity.

Dupuis distinguished two types of political sovereignty. On the one hand, Dupuis called 'matérialiste' sovereignty understood as the supreme dominion, authority, or rule over others and over things. This first type of sovereignty consisted in 'aller jusqu'à l'extrême limite, jusqu'à l'épuisement des forces tant matérielles que psychiques', which the individual, institution, or state possessed.<sup>979</sup> On the other hand, sovereignty could also be defined as pre-eminence in respect of excellence or efficacy. In this second and broader sense, sovereignty was 'la *volonté* de réaliser entièrement la vocation à laquelle on s'est senti appeler, le but que

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<sup>974</sup> Glady, 'Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme', 14.

<sup>975</sup> Passmore, 'The construction of crisis in interwar France', 169-70.

<sup>976</sup> E.g. Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (11th reprint edn. 2 vols. vol. 1. Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>977</sup> René Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 26-38.

<sup>978</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 29.

<sup>979</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 30.

l'on s'est assigné ou, s'il s'agit d'une institution, qui lui a été assigné'.<sup>980</sup> This second type of sovereignty emphasised power over oneself, rather than domination over others. It had a 'caractère concret, humain'; it was a personalist understanding of sovereignty.<sup>981</sup> Thereafter, the contrast between the power over others and the power over oneself would be at the heart of political personalism.

When the state concentrated in itself all political sovereignty, its power was only limited by the resistance of people within the state and the power of neighbouring states. There was great temptation, for the leaders of the state, to extend their power by encroaching on the people's freedoms within the borders and to extend the borders by waging war with neighbouring countries. Thus, when understood as supreme dominion with respect to power and authority over others, sovereignty led to civil war and the end of polity. Dupuis argued that the first type of sovereignty is 'par essence et par nécessité profonde, irréductiblement *unitaire* et conduit [...] aux équations Nation = Etat, Etat = domination impérialiste et centralisation (que la souveraineté soit démocratique ou monarchique)'.<sup>982</sup> By contrast, the second conception of sovereignty could not be unitary, since each person and each local institution of the federalist state would be responsible for its own goals: it was 'par essence, *pluraliste*'.<sup>983</sup> Plurality of sovereignties would characterise the ON federal state.

Dupuis followed Rousseau and Proudhon in the hope that absolute personal independence could be reconciled with the social condition. In other words, one could belong to a social order and yet 'obey only oneself' – at least in the sense of obeying one's own reason or vocation. Like Proudhon (and unlike Rousseau), ON held that personal independence would be best achieved in civil society, not in the state. Free 'associations de personnes' were supposed to express strong civil societies.<sup>984</sup> These associations had an

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<sup>980</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 29-30. The two meanings of sovereignty distinguished by Dupuis have existed since the 14<sup>th</sup> century in English, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>981</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 30.

<sup>982</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 31.

<sup>983</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 31.

<sup>984</sup> Dupuis, 'Election et souveraineté', 34.

economic equivalent: reciprocity was to be established among groups of producers characterized by mutual respect and complementary interests.

When attacking parliamentary democracy, ON targeted the French theory of national sovereignty in particular. Although the Third Republic did not have a Constitution *per se*, it was a parliamentary regime that functioned on the principles of national sovereignty, set forth since the French Revolution.<sup>985</sup> The French theory of national sovereignty holds that sovereignty belongs to the people constituted in a body politic, the nation. The collective and indivisible body of the nation is distinct from the individuals that compose it. In practice, the nation is represented by the parliament. National sovereignty is indivisible and inalienable in theory, unlike popular sovereignty. Until the constitution of 1958, national sovereignty was opposed to popular sovereignty in France.

In 1935, Rougemont wondered: ‘Nous demandons ce que peut bien signifier l’opposition du peuple et de la nation ? Par quel grossier abus du mot nation a-t-on pu venir à cette alternative ?’<sup>986</sup> Thereafter, Rougemont refused to take sides ‘dans la lutte qui met aux prises un Front dit « national » et un Front dit « populaire »’.<sup>987</sup> He was adamant that ‘la lutte des « nationaux » contre les « populaires » ne fait que prolonger dans la rue l’opposition *stérile* et *périmée* de la droite et de la gauche parlementaires.’<sup>988</sup> There was a single adversary: ‘le capitalisme centralisateur, anonyme aujourd’hui – à droite, étatiste demain – à gauche, dans l’un et l’autre cas destructeur de la liberté des personnes’.<sup>989</sup> The actual oppression of human persons did not depend on whether sovereignty belonged to the people or to the nation (defined as the sum of the people). And so, because they failed to act upon economic

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<sup>985</sup> As Article 3 of the ‘Déclaration des Droits de l’homme et du citoyen’ of 26 August 1789 puts it: ‘Le principe de toute Souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la Nation. Nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d’autorité qui n’en émane expressément.’

<sup>986</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Nous ne mangeons pas de ce pain-là (à propos du 14 juillet)’, *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 4 (15 July 1935), 2.

<sup>987</sup> Rougemont was criticizing the Popular Front’s march of 14 July 1935, under the banner of ‘pain, paix et liberté’. Rougemont, ‘Nous ne mangeons pas de ce pain-là (à propos du 14 juillet)’, 2.

<sup>988</sup> Rougemont, ‘Nous ne mangeons pas de ce pain-là (à propos du 14 juillet)’, 2.

<sup>989</sup> Rougemont, ‘Nous ne mangeons pas de ce pain-là (à propos du 14 juillet)’.

structures (not to speak of spiritual matters), French politics remained vain, whatever the policies advocated.

It was not because of political circumstances that ON rejected parliamentary democracy and national sovereignty. Personalists disagreed with the postulates: ‘Au fond, les partisans de ce système postulent que la société est faite d’une poussière d’individus.’<sup>990</sup> In reality, there was no unitary and indivisible nation; there were people, who all thought differently, who were not rational and interchangeable. Rather than protecting personal, family, and community bonds, the theory of national sovereignty contributed to crush them. In this way, ‘le parlementarisme mène normalement à la dictature.’<sup>991</sup>

In Rougemont’s words: ‘C’est de la poussière d’individus que le totalitarisme fait son ciment’; the atomised society, in which individuals were but isolated particles, was a powerful image to illustrate the vulnerability and deficiency of parliamentary democracies in the mid-1930s.<sup>992</sup> History would show that parliamentary democracies were not particularly liable to veering towards fascism. Yet the flaws of parliamentary democracies were not redeemed by the Second World War, in the eyes of ON members. As Izard remarked, after the war, ‘pas plus Denis de Rougemont et Alexandre Marc, que Robert Aron et Daniel-Rops, ne renoncèrent à leurs attaques virulentes à l’égard de la démocratie parlementaire. Bien au contraire, à notre avis, la critique des institutions démocratiques fut une constante de la philosophie personnaliste entre les deux guerres mondiales et demeure depuis lors, l’un des traits permanents de la doctrine du fédéralisme personnaliste.’<sup>993</sup> Their criticism of

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<sup>990</sup> Gladly, ‘Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme’, 14.

<sup>991</sup> N.s. ‘Du Parlementarisme’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 1.

<sup>992</sup> At the time when he was close to the ON, Jean Coutrot wrote: ‘Nous nous trouvons devant une humanité qui n’est plus une espèce, mais une poussière d’individus qu’envahit peu à peu le sentiment tragique de la vie’, in his *De quoi vivre* (Paris, 1935), 23. Coutrot alluded to Miguel de Unamuno’s *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos*. He attacked the nineteenth century for having ‘achevé le découpage de l’espèce en individus, la pulvérisation des grands blocs de grès où les croyances et les traditions cimentaient les grains de sable’ (ibid, 23-4). Quoted in Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l’ingénieur au prophète*, 211.

<sup>993</sup> Izard, ‘Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l’oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue “L’Ordre Nouveau” (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)’, 47. In 1948, Alexandre Marc asked: ‘Système représentatif ou absolutisme parlementaire ? Règne de la loi ou dictature de la majorité ? Droits de l’homme ou mobilisation du citoyen ? Condamnation des partis ou apothéose des factions ? Gouvernement du peuple par le peuple ou gouvernement des masses par une oligarchie de type nouveau ? Liberté d’épanouissement ou liberté suicide ?’ in Alexandre Marc, *A hauteur d’homme, la Révolution fédéraliste* (Paris, Je Sers, 1948), 98.

parliamentary democracy was directly linked with their rejection of the nation-state and the theory of national sovereignty.

### 3. Critique of the nation-state and of the international system

In the 1930s, an important concern of ON members was to refute jurists in the Third Reich, who manipulated the principle of national sovereignty to argue that ‘the nation comes before humanity’.<sup>994</sup> When ON condemned the confusion between the state, the nation, and the people, they targeted at once the Third Republic, the Third Reich, and the model of the nation-state in general. From 1933 onwards, Alexandre Marc contributed to spreading the terms ‘*état-nation*’ (most of the time without capital letters) and ‘*supranational*’ in French.<sup>9</sup> Both were the object of criticism in *L’Ordre Nouveau*, for related reasons which now need to be examined.

According to ON, the nation-state was doomed because it was an entity both too large and too small: it was too large for self-government and sentimental attachment to the land, and too small for cultural and economic exchanges. Arnaud Dandieu already argued as much in a 1931 lecture.<sup>996</sup> Alexandre Marc emphasised the personalist dimension of the argument in 1934: ‘L’homme n’est pas fait à l’échelle de ces immenses conglomerats politiques que l’on essaie de lui faire prendre pour « sa patrie » : ils sont beaucoup trop grands [...] ou trop petits pour lui. Trop petits si l’on prétend borner son horizon spirituel aux frontières de l’état-nation ; trop grands si l’on tente d’en faire le lieu de ce contact direct avec la chair et la terre

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<sup>994</sup> Quoted in Mark Mazower, 'The strange triumph of human rights, 1933-1950', *The Historical Journal*, XLVII, 2 (2004), 384.

<sup>995</sup> It would make an interesting subject in the history of cultural transfer and cultural exchange to trace back the origins of these terms. Marc admitted: ‘A dire vrai, je ne me souviens qui, le premier, a parlé de l’Ett-N [L’Etat-Nation]. [...] Ce que je sais, ou crois savoir, c’est que l’usage de ce terme a été imposé par moi. [...] Puisque je suis en veine de vantardise, j’attire ton attention sur le fait que je crois avoir lancé (dans les articles dont il est sorti – en 1933 – *Jeune Europe*) le terme, devenu encore plus courant qu’Ett-N., de *supranational*. Je regrette un peu aujourd’hui : *supranationalisation* eût peut-être mieux valu. [sic.]’ Marc to Rougemont, 12 March 1983, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>996</sup> Quoted in Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)', 495.

qui est nécessaire à l'homme.<sup>997</sup> Since then, the deficiency of the nation-state from within and from without has become a leitmotiv of European federalism.<sup>998</sup>

The nation-state could not be the basis of healthy community feeling, according to ON. The nation, as a glorification of the ancestors' land, was a glorification of the dead, which justified more and more deaths in wars. This was a vicious circle, which ON sought to break. As early as May 1932, René Dupuis denounced the enslavement, since the French Revolution, of real human beings to the principle of nationalities and the glorification of 'la Terre des Ancêtres'; this was particularly topical, 'au moment où certaines formations révolutionnaires, d'un extrême intérêt par ailleurs, semblent, à l'étranger, commettre les erreurs que nous dénonçons ici ; sans parler de l'Hitlérisme dont la trahison n'est plus à démontrer, un mouvement tel que le Vorkämpfer, par exemple, risque de faire enliser la Révolution dans les confusions entre Nation et Révolution.'<sup>999</sup> A year later, Hitler was in power.

Turning to the international and supranational question, ON rejected the principle of minority rights, as established by the peace settlements that followed the First World War and assured by the League of Nations.<sup>1000</sup> ON remarked that the idea of minority rights was potentially collectivist and oppressive of personal freedom, like the idea of national sovereignty. Jurists in the Third Reich pushed the collectivism inherent in the idea of minority

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<sup>997</sup> Michel Glady, 'A hauteur d'homme (Des frontières au fédéralisme)', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 15 (Nov. 1934), 8-22, quote 9.

<sup>998</sup> After the Second World War, a key tenet of Denis de Rougemont would be: 'Parce qu'ils sont trop petits, les Etats-Nations devraient se fédérer à l'échelle continentale ; et parce qu'ils sont trop grands, ils devraient se fédéraliser à l'intérieur.' Denis de Rougemont, *Lettre ouverte aux européens* (Paris, 1970), 157. See also Denis de Rougemont, *Le Cheminement des esprits. L'Europe en jeu II* (Neuchâtel, 1970); Denis de Rougemont, 'De l'Etat-Nation aux régions fédérées', *Sozialwissenschaftlichen Studien. Europäische Probleme aus Wirtschaft und Politik*, 12 (1967), 107-29; Denis de Rougemont, *L'Europe en jeu. Trois discours suivis de "Documents sur le Congrès de la Haye"* (Neuchâtel, 1948); Denis de Rougemont, *L'Un et le divers, ou la cité européenne* (Neuchâtel, 1970); Denis de Rougemont, *Lettres aux Députés européens* (Neuchâtel, 1950).

<sup>999</sup> René Dupuis, 'Révolution et "Patrie"', *Plans*, nouvelle série, 2 (15 May 1932), 8-11.

<sup>1000</sup> See esp. the accusations summed up in 'Les Responsables', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 6th year, 42 (15 June 1938), 1-31.

rights to an extreme.<sup>1001</sup> This confirmed ON suspicion that that minority rights could be abused for nationalist and collectivist purposes. It was clear by the mid-1930s that ‘sur le plan politique, l’expérience faite en Europe centrale a montré de façon décisive que la fameuse « question des nationalités » n’était pas plus résolue par l’identification – au moins théorique – de la « nationalité » et de l’Etat (selon le principe, parfaitement inapplicable d’ailleurs : à chaque nationalité un Etat), que par la réunion au sein d’un grand « empire » de peuples multiples.’<sup>1002</sup> Instead of minority rights and the Wilsonian principle of nationalities, ON promoted personal rights.

Personal rights differed from human rights in so far as personalists emphasised that persons were anchored in the various ‘*sociétés naturelles* dans lesquelles l’homme naît, vit et exerce son activité quotidienne’, as well as in ‘*communautés*, libres groupes d’hommes unis par un idéal commun’.<sup>1003</sup> Examples of ‘*sociétés naturelles*’ – meaning necessary – were the commune and the firm, while Dupuis mentioned as freely created ‘*communautés*’ the regions of Alsace and Brittany, or else confessional groups. Dupuis sought to emphasise tangible bonds in people’s lives by contrast with the groups created by lawyers and rulers, from national minorities to empires. Through ON, Rougemont benefited from his analysis. Dupuis’s ability to criticise the international system from both theoretical and empirical standpoints makes him an important – and overlooked – political analyst in the 1930s.

Thus, ON argued that nation-states had been constructed for warfare and could only aim at encroaching upon each other. Therefore, any inter-national system was bound to fail, not just the League of Nations. It follows from this that a European union of nation-states would only lead to quarrels as to who would dominate and benefit from the union. Radical distrust of the nation-state marks the distinctiveness of ON among other movements aiming at

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<sup>1001</sup> In October 1933, shortly before Germany left the League of Nations, the German representative to the League expressed a typically nationalist view: ‘The members of a nation or an ethnic group living in a foreign environment constitute, not a total number of individuals calculated mechanically but on the contrary the members of an organic community [...]. The very fact that they belong to a nation means that the nation in question has a natural and moral right to consider that all its members – even those separated from the mother country by State frontiers – constitute a moral and cultural whole.’, translated and quoted by Mazower, ‘The strange triumph of human rights, 1933-1950’, 384.

<sup>1002</sup> René Dupuis, ‘Politique de l’état ou politique de la nation?’ *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 21 (June 1935), 10.

<sup>1003</sup> Dupuis, ‘Election et souveraineté’, 33-4. The emphasis is his.



a peaceful and united Europe in the 1930s.<sup>1004</sup> Having shown the manifold negations of federalist personalism, it is now time to turn to practical plans for an ‘ordre nouveau’.

## **Practical aims of the personalist-federalist revolution**

Federalist personalism was to start with a revolution, before the appropriate institutions could be established to form the ON federation. The revolution, institutions, and federation will be considered successively.

### **1. The revolution: freedom and conflicts**

The underlying principle of the personalist revolution, like most revolutions, was a cry for freedom: ‘Si le principe de toute liberté humaine ne se trouve pas à l’origine d’un système, il ne se trouvera pas non plus dans ses conséquences pratiques.’<sup>1005</sup> Reference to the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 and to the French Revolution seemed to be a must for revolutionary movements in France. ON criticized the theoretical citizen of 1789, and claimed a deeper understanding of people, resulting from modern sociology and anthropology. As Rougemont put it: ‘*Considérer l’homme en tant qu’individu abstrait (Principe de 89) et fonder sur cet individu toutes les institutions, et la morale, c’est méconnaître la nature concrète de l’homme, qui comporte le conflit.*’<sup>1006</sup> Conversely, ‘*Considérer l’homme en tant que personne et fonder sur cette personne toutes les institutions, c’est reconnaître la nature concrète de l’homme, qui comporte le conflit.*’<sup>1007</sup> ON departed from idealistic visions of human nature in emphasising that society was the realm of conflicts.

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<sup>1004</sup> For an overview of the idea of European union, see Elisabeth du Réau, *L’Idée d’Europe au vingtième siècle* (2nd edn. Bruxelles, 2001). See also, for the late 1920s and early 1930s, Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l’ingénieur au prophète*, 132-8.

<sup>1005</sup> Rougemont and Daniel-Rops, ‘Spirituel d’abord’, 14.

<sup>1006</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 156-7. The emphasis is his own.

<sup>1007</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 160. The emphasis is his own.

The idea that the human being is inherently conflictual is reminiscent of Georg Simmel's analysis of life as tension and conflict.<sup>1008</sup> The question of the influence of Simmel upon ON is an aspect that has been overlooked so far. Alexandre Marc was aware of Simmel's sociology.<sup>1009</sup> Simmel's philosophy of life had a major impact in the early decades of the twentieth century, both among academics and within the cultural and artistic spheres. Although Simmel is not quoted in *L'Ordre Nouveau*, it is a possible conjecture that his views on conflict influenced the ON.

The parallel may be only apparent: both ON and Simmel did draw extensively on Pierre Joseph Proudhon for their analysis of conflict. Proudhon believed that the universe was based on a 'scientific' law of antagonism and complementarity.<sup>1010</sup> This principle may be seen as an adaptation of Heraclitus (conflict as the principle of all things). Proudhon dreamt of realizing peace and justice on earth on the basis of this 'scientific' law of complementarity. At the same time, he was critical of all attempts to construct a system based a 'scientific' law (particularly positivism). In his *Principe fédératif*, he called on the spirit ('esprit') against nature, and on freedom against authority.<sup>1011</sup> Let us see how ON institutions sought to canalise this aspiration to freedom.

## 2. The institutions: checks and balances

Given the conflictual nature of society, the aim of ON institutions was to 'rendre les antagonismes féconds pour l'ensemble du corps social', 'orienter ces tensions créatrices, sur le plan économique et sur le plan politique'.<sup>1012</sup> The influence of Proudhon was patent. Each

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<sup>1008</sup> Georg Simmel (1858–1918) was a prolific German philosopher and sociologist. Towards the end of his life, Simmel developed an opposition between life and form, in which life as a dynamic dimension struggled against rigidified form in a dialectical tension.

<sup>1009</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 78-9.

<sup>1010</sup> 'Le monde moral comme le monde physique repose sur une pluralité d'éléments irréductibles et antagonistes et c'est de la contradiction de ces éléments que résulte la vie et le mouvement dans l'univers.' Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Oeuvres choisies* (Paris, 1967), 61, 11.

<sup>1011</sup> See Proudhon, *Du Principe fédératif* (c1863) quoted in Pierre Ansart (ed.) *Proudhon textes et débats* (Paris, 1984), 345-6.

<sup>1012</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 160-1.

person's freedom and responsibility within particular communities (family, commune-region, enterprise-trade) had to be encouraged – or at least permitted – by the economic and political institutions. The laws drafted by ON would aim at respecting personal differences first, then local and regional diversities, and general principles would be as few and limited as possible.

Ordre Nouveau personalists acknowledged the need for a state on the condition that the primary units of government would be small communities, constrained by immediate responsibility for their decisions. They were indebted to Proudhon's radical *anti-centralization*. This term is preferable to 'decentralisation', which implies that the decisions still depend on the central administration. As Aron put it in 1934: 'le fédéralisme n'est pas la décentralisation [...]. Pour le fédéralisme, les impulsions et les initiatives viennent des organismes locaux'.<sup>1013</sup> The people were to take political initiatives, while the state was only to let the persons and the local communities free to take responsibilities. ON members believed in the ability of small groups to manage concrete affairs which they could understand, but had no trust in the political discernment of the masses.<sup>1014</sup>

In his *Politique de la personne* (1934), Rougemont opposed any 'utilitarian' morals in politics: 'le bien de l'ensemble ne peut exister *qu'à partir* du bien de chaque personne. Le bien de l'ensemble est comme une extension normale du bien particulier. La personne est *première* ou n'est pas.'<sup>1015</sup> This personalist principle implied a demystification of the state as no more than a dull administration: 'Cela revient à dire, sur le plan politique, que l'Etat n'est rien d'autre qu'une machine destinée à subvenir à l'entretien des personnes. Privé de toute dignité mystique, il doit devenir un simple organe d'économie et de distribution des tâches serviles et mécaniques, ou bien encore, une administration, dotée d'une police minime.'<sup>1016</sup>

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<sup>1013</sup> 'Précis de l'Ordre Nouveau', Annex to Robert Aron, *Dictature de la liberté* (Paris, 1935), 259. Following the French decentralisation laws of 1982, Rougemont proved disappointed: 'c'est encore au centre qu'appartient la distribution des pouvoirs alors que le projet doit partir des citoyens, des communes, des régions. C'est-à-dire d'en bas.' Rougemont, *Le Monde* (20 Aug. 1982), 11.

<sup>1014</sup> One may find an echo of Tocqueville here, although he is not quoted once in *L'Ordre Nouveau*. But ON militant André Jardin (no relation to Jean) would eventually become President of France's National Tocqueville Commission. See his *Histoire du libéralisme politique : de la crise de l'absolutisme à la Constitution de 1875* (Paris, 1985).

<sup>1015</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 55. The emphasis, which gives this statement its 'anti-utilitarian' meaning, is Rougemont's.

<sup>1016</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 55.

Thus, ON called for a state limited to administering the four regalian functions (justice, police, army and diplomacy) *plus* – and this is a significant addition – running a limited sector of the economy.<sup>1017</sup> Thus, ON personalists sought to have both a minimal state and a welfare state.

State planning of primary economic goods, according to Dandieu's dichotomic principle, made the ON state different from a minimalist state. In practice, it is difficult to see how the state would draw a plan of primary goods without becoming more than an administration with a minimal police and diplomacy. Apparently unaware of this difficulty, Rougemont emphasised that the state could not take decisions for the general good of persons:

Une autre conséquence politique du personnalisme, qui marque bien l'opposition de ce système à ceux qu'on a fondé sur l'individu libéral, c'est le *fédéralisme*. L'individu étant conçu par les juristes à partir de l'ensemble, ses droits dépendent, en pratique, du bon plaisir de l'Etat. Tout au contraire, des lois fondées sur la personne sont obligées de tenir compte en premier lieu des diversités personnelles, puis locales, puis régionales... On pourrait dire, d'une manière un peu paradoxale, que ces lois perdent en puissance à mesure qu'elles gagnent en généralité. [...] Mais de la sorte, le centre de l'autorité n'est pas dans les bureaux de l'Etat, il reste dans l'activité réelle de chaque personne, au sein de groupes d'autant plus forts qu'ils sont moins étendus.<sup>1018</sup>

Thus, Rougemont's *Politique de la personne* was very much a subjectivist objection to central regulation. But even for those who do not share his anti-objectivist approach, Rougemont's appeal to diversity has a point. The question of how to reconcile personal, local, and regional diversity with a welfare state remains open.

It is a recurring theme of *Politique de la personne* that the human person is his or her own judge and the measure of all things. While fascism will be studied in the following chapter, it is important to note that Rougemont defined personalism as *the* anti-fascist device in 1934:

Le personnalisme [...] est le véritable antifascisme politique. La personne n'est jamais « au pas ». Elle est aux ordres de sa vocation, elle est seule responsable de son risque ; surtout, elle se sait plus réelle que toute réalité collective. Elle ne croit pas à la valeur d'une unité obtenue aux dépens des unités concrètes et de leur nécessaire diversité. Elle veut que l'Etat soit une émanation de l'homme, et non l'inverse. Elle veut qu'il y

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<sup>1017</sup> 'Nous voulons...' 'La fin de l'Etat Moloch', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 26.

<sup>1018</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 55. Rougemont emphasises federalism.

ait d'abord des hommes humains, ensuite l'Etat au service de ces hommes. *Là où l'homme veut être total, l'Etat ne sera jamais totalitaire.*<sup>1019</sup>

ON repeated the motto 'Là où l'homme est *total*, l'état ne peut être *totalitaire*', and this implied a separation of powers.<sup>1020</sup> The future personalist 'New Order' was to have a system of checks and balances to limit the wrongful uses of political, economic, and administrative powers: '*L'administration* locale est confiée à la Commune qui, dans les limites de sa compétence, organise la justice, les finances, les travaux publics, l'enseignement. Toutes les questions qui dépassent la compétence locale, incombent au Conseil Administratif Fédéral dont les membres sont 1) élus en partie par les Communes ; 2) choisis en partie par cooptation ; 3) nommés en partie par le Conseil suprême.' Plans for a 'Conseil suprême' intensified contemporary suspicion about ON (Jacques Maritain, for example, suspected ON of being a masonic plot).<sup>1021</sup>

There is a more straightforward explanation for the 'Conseil suprême'. The works of Eugénia Hélice – one of the only active women at ON, together with Yvonne Serruys, Henriette Cahen and Jacqueline Chevalley – suggest inspiration from American federalism. The tempering her writings brought to the French anti-liberal strand in ON politics has been overlooked to date. In 1935-6, Eugénia Hélice – who hid her gender under the signature E. Hélice – pleaded for a court similar to the Supreme Court of the United States of America, which would control the conformity of all laws with the constitution and with the principles of federalism.<sup>1022</sup> She argued that a supreme court should defend the spirit (rather than the text) of the constitution and guarantee that the laws remained faithful to the principles on

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<sup>1019</sup> Article of 1934, republished in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 138-9. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1020</sup> 'Nous voulons...', 'III. Les institutions nécessaires. 4. Contre l'étatisme, a) La vraie « séparation des pouvoirs »', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 25.

'Nous voulons...', 'III. Les institutions nécessaires. 4. Contre l'étatisme, a) La vraie « séparation des pouvoirs »', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 25. See also the scheme of political organisation in Aron, *Dictature de la liberté*, 265-6.

<sup>1021</sup> He admitted it to Marc over twenty years later. See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 397. On Maritain's suspicions of Marc as a Communist revolutionary and a freemason see also Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', 441.

<sup>1022</sup> Eugénia Hélice, 'La Cour Suprême des Etats-Unis', *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 3 (15 June 1935). and Eugénia Hélice, 'La Cour Suprême des Etats-Unis', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 31 (15 May 1936).

which the federal state was based.<sup>1023</sup> Modelled on these principles, the ‘Conseil Suprême’ (the capital S is hers) would be ‘composé d’hommes intègres, ayant une fois pour toutes renoncé à tous les avantages du pouvoir’.<sup>1024</sup> The legitimacy of the ‘Conseil Suprême’ was contrasted with the legality of the economic and administrative bodies: ‘le Conseil Suprême qui – au dessus des Conseils Economiques et Administratifs qui représentent le pouvoir proprement dit – incarne *l’autorité*, se renouvelle par cooptation pour pouvoir contrôler en toute indépendance tous les organismes étatiques et économiques.’<sup>1025</sup> Thus, ON reiterated the classic distinction between the legitimacy of authority and the legality of power.

Both the system of checks and balances and the reference to the supreme court suggest that ON copied part of the American federal system. This is somewhat surprising: ON was famously anti-American. *Le Cancer américain*, by Aron and Dandieu, remained on the list of recommended texts in *L’Ordre Nouveau* (as did everything Dandieu wrote) throughout the 1930s.<sup>1026</sup> The blatant anti-Americanism of *Le Cancer américain* was not unparalleled,<sup>10</sup> even if Pascal Ory has shown recently that anti-Americanism did not concern the majority of French people.<sup>1028</sup> The America that Aron and Dandieu called cancerous was both an economic model and a symbol for an attitude, combining the goal of productivity with utilitarian morals. That the federal political institutions imagined by ON drew on American parliamentary democracy (with Eugénia Hélice in particular) suggests fissures in the model of ON. Furthermore, there seem to be discrepancies as to the readiness of various members of

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<sup>1023</sup> Eugénia Hélice, 'La Cour Suprême des Etats-Unis (II)', *Bulletin de liaison des groupes Ordre Nouveau*, 4 (1935).

<sup>1024</sup> ‘Nous voulons...’, ‘III. Les institutions nécessaires. 4. Contre l’étatisme, a) La vraie « séparation des pouvoirs »’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 26.

<sup>1025</sup> ‘Nous voulons...’, ‘III. Les institutions nécessaires. 4. Contre l’étatisme, a) La vraie « séparation des pouvoirs »’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 9 (March 1934), 26.

<sup>1026</sup> Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le Cancer américain* (Paris, 1931).

<sup>1027</sup> Duranton-Crabol, 'De l'anti-américanisme en France vers 1930: la réception des *Scènes de la vie future*', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Jan-March 2001); Ralph Schor, 'Les Etats-Unis vus de droite. La crise américaine de 1929 à travers la presse française de droite', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 42, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1995). Schor argues that in the rightwing press, ‘la crise américaine était jugée comme une revanche du réel et une justification de la prudence française.’ (P.576) For a comparison of *Le Cancer américain* with Georges Duhamel’s *Scènes de la vie future*, see Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l’ingénieur au prophète*, 126-8.

<sup>1028</sup> With particular reference to cinema and Jazz music, Schor, 'Les Etats-Unis vus de droite. La crise américaine de 1929 à travers la presse française de droite', 65-6.

ON to think about the wider world. At this point, an assessment of the limitations of ON federalism is needed.

### 3. The federation: borders and limitations

The ON vision of federation sought to modify, but not to abolish borders. Claude Chevalley expressed a common view in the milieux favourable to a European union when he wrote: ‘les frontières jouent dans l’état des choses actuel un rôle à la fois excessif et inefficace.’<sup>1029</sup> Borders remained necessary between different administrative and economic entities, yet they seemed excessive because they constituted an ‘obsession’ for nationalists, reinforced centralisation (especially in France), and hindered economic and intellectual exchanges. The ON revolution, while potentially universal, would first occur within the ‘limites de la Fédération Ordre Nouveau’.<sup>1030</sup> Unsurprisingly, this federation was France first and foremost: ‘la terre décisive’.<sup>1031</sup>

In a statement at once Eurocentric and nationalistic, Aron and Dandieu claimed that ‘pour sauver l’Occident et l’Europe, nous devons d’abord, aujourd’hui, nous appuyer sur la France.’<sup>1032</sup> The mission of France seemed but an adaptation of the myth of a universal and civilising mission of France, characteristic of much of French nationalism since the eighteenth century at least. In itself, it was nothing unusual: many pro-European movements called for a European union, while hoping their nation of origin would lead.<sup>1033</sup> Yet for a movement which claimed to be antinationalistic, it was paradoxical, to say the least. It is significant that the first article of *L’Ordre Nouveau* was entitled ‘Mission ou démission de la France’ and evoked

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<sup>1029</sup> Claude Chevalley and Michel Glady, ‘La folie des frontières (Exemple de méthode dichotomique)’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 12 (15 June 1934), 18.

<sup>1030</sup> Chevalley and Glady, ‘La folie des frontières (Exemple de méthode dichotomique)’, 25.

<sup>1031</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 277.

<sup>1032</sup> Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, 277.

<sup>1033</sup> On the various projects of European union in the 1920-33, see Réau, *L’Idée d’Europe au vingtième siècle*, 71-123.

<sup>1034</sup> L’O.N., ‘Mission ou démission de la France’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 1 (May 1933), 1-4.

the idea of a civilizing mission.<sup>1034</sup> ON personalists remained dependent on common views of the nation at the time.

A number of ON sympathisers, including Marc and Jardin, believed in national(ist) ‘Valeurs françaises’ – this was the title of the issue number 8, dedicated to the dead of the February 1934 riots.<sup>1035</sup> ON insisted that there was a good sense of pride in one’s country, but it was urgent to distinguish it from the national state. In the winter 1933-4, ON members established a distinction between ‘nation’ – the artificial construct of ideology (inculcated through the state and schools), and ‘patrie’ – the attachment to one’s origins.<sup>1036</sup> This distinction was not devoid of ambiguities, especially when ON tried to explain how ‘la nation’ – France – should be universal. The contrast between public life and the real life of the country was drawn from the extreme-right thinker Charles Maurras. It is ironic that Alexandre Marc, a Russian émigré with Jewish origins and who had all the characteristics of a rootless intellectual, could have adhered nostalgically to Maurras’s idea of the motherland.

Rougemont, the only non-French ON member besides Marc, also adhered to the ON distinction, repeating all his life that nationalism was a mystification of the patriotic *fact*.<sup>1</sup> For instance he stated in 1935: ‘Le nationalisme existe parce qu’on l’enseigne ; c’est une mystique, un idéal abstrait, un orgueil. Il existe dans la mesure où on l’exalte. Le patriotisme, c’est le contraire’.<sup>1038</sup> This led him into contradictory views about France, and about the nation. For example, in an attempt to clarify ‘la distinction entre patrie et nation, que nos adversaires jugent subtile’ (and rightly so), Rougemont praised the ‘nation spirituelle’ and

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<sup>1035</sup> On 6 February 1934, a demonstration protesting against the new government of Daladier and the dismissal of the Prefect of Police Chiappe turned into a riot. Seventeen people died on 6 February and nine in a counter-demonstration three days later. On the events, see Danielle Tartakowsky, *Le Pouvoir est dans la rue. Crises politiques et manifestations en France* (Paris, 1998), 85-117.

<sup>1036</sup> As Rougemont was away from Paris at the time (he lived on Ré island), Daniel-Rops informed him: ‘Au point de vue doctrinal, vous a-t-on dit que nous avons après une longue discussion décidé [...] d’employer avec soin le mot *patrie* dans le sens où Marc l’explique dans *Avant-Poste* et moi dans *Chem. de N.D. [Chemins de Notre Dame]*’. Daniel-Rops to Rougemont, 4 March [1934?], Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: ‘L’Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]’.

<sup>1037</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Le plus beau pays du monde’, *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 265 (Oct. 1935), 634. Following this article, Rougemont would not cease to attack the nationalist teaching of history in schools and to criticise realms of national memory. E.g. Rougemont, ‘De l’Etat-Nation aux régions fédérées’, 107-29.

<sup>1038</sup> Rougemont, ‘Le plus beau pays du monde’, 633.



denounced 'la patrie, réalité concrète, et souvent servitude concrète' – contradicting thereby the doctrinal distinction established by ON and indeed in many of his other works.<sup>1039</sup>

In this article, Rougemont held a revolutionary – that is 'positive' in his view – definition of the nation: 'La *nation* étant l'idéal spirituel commun à plusieurs petites patries, représente le pôle révolutionnaire de tout effort humain. Il est grotesque de voir la fête « nationale », donc révolutionnaire, du 14 juillet, transformée en fête « patriotique » et réactionnaire.'<sup>1040</sup> Rougemont proposed to replace Bastille day with a celebration of 1 May, both universal and French:

Contre le 14 juillet trahi par la réaction bourgeoise, contre le 1<sup>er</sup> mai trahi par l'impérialisme stalinien, célébrons un 1<sup>er</sup> mai révolutionnaire, universel, dans lequel puissent communier toutes les *nations* qui veulent la révolution nécessaire, celle de la liberté et de l'ordre humain. Cette fête sera française dans la mesure où la France représente aujourd'hui le solide espoir de la liberté contre toutes les dictatures. Il ne dépend que de nous que la France redevienne, comme en 93, la *nation de la révolution* !<sup>1041</sup>

This sudden enthusiasm for the Revolution of 1793 contradicts Rougemont's repeated condemnation of Jacobinism. Of course, an article of half a page, published in a newspaper for ON sympathisers (*A nous la liberté* was edited by Robert Aron and René Dupuis), should not be overestimated. One may suggest that the article shows Rougemont's determination to be revolutionary: it seems as if he was bidding against those who claimed the inheritance of 1789 and of 1917.

For all their ambivalent attitude vis-à-vis France, Marc and Rougemont (the two non-French ON members) may have been more consistent in their practical endeavours to extend the ON revolution to Europe, if not to the world. Marc drew on Eugen Rosenstock to argue that all nations had a specific revolutionary mission to accomplish, which in turn brought their

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<sup>1039</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'C'est la Révolution qui fait la Nation', *A nous la liberté*, (30 April 1937), 3.

<sup>1040</sup> Rougemont, 'C'est la Révolution qui fait la Nation', 3.

<sup>1041</sup> Rougemont, 'C'est la Révolution qui fait la Nation', 3.

<sup>1042</sup> Rosenstock's *Die Europäischen Revolutionen--Volkscharaktere und Staatenbildung* (Jena, 1931) depicted one thousand years of European history created through five different European national 'revolutions' that collectively came to an end in World War I.

universal concert to a more global level each time.<sup>1042</sup> Marc was extremely active in networking between the European ‘third-way movements’ in the 1930s.<sup>1043</sup>

Following Hitler’s coming to power in 1933, his activities tended to focus more on France, without abandoning a European perspective however, except perhaps at times in the 1930s.<sup>1044</sup> For instance, in June 1934, Marc still hoped that ON would be able to establish connections between the European ‘third-way movements’ similar to ON. He wrote to Rougemont that the group was planning a special issue of *L’Ordre Nouveau* ‘en novembre « Par dessus les frontières » (différents mouvements O.N. ou simili O.N. en Allemagne – n[ou]s avons des nouvelles récentes d’HSB [Harro Schulze-Boysen] que Chevalley a vu à Berlin – Angleterre, Suisse, Belgique, Espagne etc)’.<sup>1045</sup> This indicates the importance Marc attached to the European character of the third way and the energy he put into it. Marc called for a ‘fédéralisme européen réel’ as early as 1933.<sup>1046</sup> The federalist personalism of ON reached a larger audience in the Resistance during the Second World War and in the Europeanist milieu afterward, in the context of the (seeming) discredit of the European nation-states.

To conclude, the federalist personalism of ON was a deeply serious attempt to rethink social, economic and political issues as a whole and on the basis of a non-confessional

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<sup>1043</sup> See Christian Roy and John Hellman, 'Le personnalisme et les contacts entre non-conformistes de France et d'Allemagne autour de l'*Ordre Nouveau* et de *Gegner* 1930-42', in Hans-Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, and Michel Trebitsch (eds), *Entre Locarno et Vichy: les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années trente* (Paris, 1993), 203-18.

<sup>1044</sup> Around the founding of the ON in 1930, Marc developed the following (rhetorical?) alternative: either averting another world war and the collapse of European civilisation by creating a revolutionary New Order, or escaping the rottenness of European politics for the idyllic refuge of French values he saw in Quebec. I thank Christian Roy for pointing this out. See Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 85; Christian Roy, 'Le personnalisme de *L'Ordre Nouveau* et le Québec: son rôle dans la formation de Guy Frégault (1930-1947)', *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 46, 3 (Winter 1993), 463-84.

<sup>1045</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 29 June 1934, Neuchâtel, B.P.U.N., Rougemont papers, File: 'L'Ordre Nouveau [1933-83]'.

<sup>1046</sup> Alexandre Marc and René Dupuis, *Jeune Europe* (Paris, 1933). On the continuity of Marc’s federalist views, see Izard, 'Personnalisme et fédéralisme à travers l'oeuvre des fondateurs de la revue "L'Ordre Nouveau" (Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Arnaud Dandieu, Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc et Denis de Rougemont)', 448-9.

understanding of the human person. Independently of its political influence (or lack thereof), ON is important for three main reasons. Firstly, ON personalists sought to displace the terms of the secularist vs. religious conflicts in 1930s France. Their call upon the spiritual dimension of the person could be interpreted in atheist, agnostic, or religious terms. The conflict between revolution and religion was to be overcome in the ‘révolution spirituelle’. Secondly, in a society where religious and secularist ideas influenced the very manner in which ‘the economic’ was defined (as Kevin Passmore has argued),<sup>1047</sup> ON attempted to unite people around a non-confessional understanding of the human person. Anthropology and a union of state planning with a market economy was to be the basis of the ON economy, which would put an end to the proletarian condition and satisfy the primary needs of all. Thirdly, the federalism of ON was also an attempt to overcome the framework of the nation-state and stereotypes of the unitary nation. However, we have seen that all for its claims to rise above nationalism, ON remained dependent on French ‘universalism’: the idea that France had a unique revolutionary mission to save the world.

An essential part of Rougemont’s role in ON was to act as an interpreter, not in the sense of a cultural transfer from foreign cultures, but in conveying the ideas of other personalists, such as Alexandre Marc, Arnaud Dandieu, and René Dupuis, and linking them to the contents of intellectual and moral debate at the time. Rougemont had a gift for catch-phrases, such as ‘le désordre établi’ and ‘là où l’homme veut être total, l’état ne sera jamais totalitaire’. His independent contributions to personalism will be the subject of Chapter 7. Yet Chapter 6 now proceeds to show that his personalism would not have taken the form that it did without fascism in 1930s Europe.

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<sup>1047</sup> This is one of the main contentions of Kevin Passmore, *From liberalism to fascism: The right in a French province, 1928–1939* (Cambridge, 1997).

## Chapter 6. Personalism and fascism: definitions, confusions, negations

Both personalism and fascism – treated as generic phenomena in this chapter – shared the quest for a third-way solution to the famous ‘crisis’ of capitalism and parliamentary democracy in interwar Europe. Zeev Sternhell’s definition of fascism as ‘la troisième voie dans sa pureté la plus extrême’ implies that personalism, as a third way, was related to fascism.<sup>1048</sup> What was the relation between personalism and fascism? Is Sternhell right to suggest personalism was a French proto-fascism? If it is so, how could Rougemont call upon personalism as a weapon against fascism?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a better understanding of French personalism by comparison with fascism. We are still far from having reached an agreement on an all-encompassing definition of fascism.<sup>1049</sup> As Stanley Payne has put it, ‘Fascism is notoriously slippery and resistant to interpretation, and even to basic definition’.<sup>1050</sup> Under these conditions, seeking to define personalism vis-à-vis fascism may seem like doubling up the difficulty. And yet it is not only legitimate to compare fascism and personalism – they were two third-way movements of the 1930s – but also necessary, since serious confusions have occurred between the two. The very first articulation of personalism in France was condemned by French communists and Soviet observers (*Izvestia*) as an attempt to foment a

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<sup>1048</sup> Zeev Sternhell, ‘La troisième voie fasciste ou la recherche d’une culture politique alternative’, in Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l’entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995), 20.

<sup>1049</sup> As a point of departure, fascism may be characterised, in Roger Griffin’s consensual definition, as ‘a genus of modern, revolutionary, “mass” politics which, while extremely heterogeneous in its social support and in the specific ideology promoted by its many permutations, draws its internal cohesion and driving force from a core myth that a period of perceived national decline and decadence is giving way to one of rebirth and renewal in a post-liberal new-order.’, in Roger Griffin (ed.) *International fascism: theories, causes and the new consensus* (London, 1998), 14.

<sup>1050</sup> Stanley G. Payne, ‘Historical fascism and the radical right’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXXV, 1 (2000), 110. See also Dietrich Orlow, ‘Fascists among themselves: some observations on West European politics in the 1930s’, *European Review*, XI, 3 (2003), 245-8.

fascist revolution.<sup>1051</sup> And the debate on the relations between fascism and personalism has been going on ever since.

The polemic has reached a peak in the 1980s, with the ‘Sternhell controversy’.<sup>1052</sup> In his *Ni droite ni gauche, L'idéologie fasciste en France* (first published in 1983), Zeev Sternhell has argued that the quest for a ‘third way’ between liberal capitalism and communism was the sign of an insidious kinship with fascist ideology.<sup>1053</sup> The neither right nor left line (challenged by Sternhell) characterises many political movements in French history, some of which are highly regarded, such as the Gaullist ‘Rassemblement national’.<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s, a large spectrum of political groups claimed to belong neither to the right nor to the left, from the conservative Croix-de-Feu league, through the small fascist party of Jacques Doriot (PPF), to the left-wing dissident ‘Frontisme’ of Gaston Bergery and the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’ studied by Loubet del Bayle.<sup>1055</sup> Because it seemed to put those very diverse groups in the same (deeply sensitive) category, *Ni droite ni gauche* led to bitter polemics in France.

In a recent *mise au point*, Brian Jenkins has underlined that it was ‘when Sternhell turned his attention to the interwar period that the alarm bells began to ring’.<sup>1056</sup> What was disturbing was not so much Sternhell’s consideration of ‘the “usual suspects” [...] but [also] the antimaterialist revisionists of Marxism from Georges Sorel to Henri de Man and Marcel Déat, along with the *personnalistes* like Emmanuel Mounier and the “spiritual” nationalists around Thierry Maulnier.’<sup>1057</sup> This is to say that the personalist case is sensitive and

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<sup>1051</sup> See John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950* (Toronto, 1981), 6.

<sup>1052</sup> I borrow the expression from Robert Wohl, ‘French fascism both right and left: Reflections on the Sternhell controversy’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 63 (March 1991), 91-8.

<sup>1053</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche* (3rd edn. Paris, 2000). See also his ‘Preface to the English Edition’ in Zeev Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France* (Berkeley, 1986), XV.

<sup>1054</sup> Sternhell has claimed that the slogan ‘ni droite, ni gauche’ was launched by George Valois in his book *Le Fascisme* (1927). See Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche. L'idéologie fasciste en France* (2nd edn. Bruxelles, 1987), 145, 391, 448.

<sup>1055</sup> Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*.

<sup>1056</sup> Brian Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right* (Oxford, 2005), 23.

<sup>1057</sup> Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 23.

enormously significant. It is sensitive because some personalists were indeed very close to fascism, in particular in Vichy France, and at the same time they laid down much of the foundations of post-war France.<sup>1058</sup> It is enormously significant because it shows how the polarity between liberal democracy on the one hand, and the various third ways (including fascism), on the other, can be inappropriate. This chapter argues that personalism is at the centre of what remains highly controversial in the debate concerning French fascism today.

With respect to personalism, the ‘Sternhell controversy’ raised two distinct sets of issues: whether personalism was a proto-fascism, and whether the ‘neither right, nor left’ line had any consistency. Both questions are considered in a first section, before proposing some guidelines for the comparison between personalism and fascism, and finally showing how Rougemont may allow us to overcome the twofold classification that has dogged the debate on fascism in France.

## **1. The ‘Sternhell controversy’ then and now**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the ‘Sternhell controversy’ led to decisive steps in the historiography of fascism as a generic phenomenon. *Ni droite ni gauche* has been the subject

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<sup>1058</sup> Bernard Comte and John Hellman (from an opposite perspective) have argued this with regards to the National Leadership School at Uriage, in Vichy France: Bernard Comte, *Une Utopie combattante, L'Ecole des cadres d'Uriage, 1940-1942* (Paris, 1991); John Hellman, *The knight-monks of Vichy France. Uriage 1940-1945* (Montreal, London, 1993). See below for further analysis of Hellman.

of numerous articles,<sup>1059</sup> interviews,<sup>1060</sup> polemics,<sup>1061</sup> political debates,<sup>1062</sup> a trial,<sup>1063</sup> and lastly a Master's thesis.<sup>1064</sup> Sternhell created a 'choc salutaire' in the words of Francesco Germinario.<sup>1065</sup> This debate is somewhat dated after the important research on fascism in France by William Irvine and Robert Soucy,<sup>1066</sup> followed by various French and non-French scholars.<sup>1067</sup> And yet, the field remains far from consensual: on the one hand, some French historians continue to downplay the existence of fascism in France;<sup>1068</sup> on the other hand, revisionist historians of French fascism often directly criticize each other.<sup>1069</sup> And so the 'Sternhell controversy' is still contentious and instructive. After a brief summary of

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<sup>1059</sup> The reaction of French historians was censorious in the 1980s, whereas non-French historians proved more balanced in their analysis. By French historians: Shlomo Sand, 'L'idéologie fasciste en France', *Esprit*, 8 (Aug.-Sept. 1983), 149-60; Michel Winock, 'Fascisme à la française ou fascisme introuvable?' *Le Débat*, 25 (May 1983), 35-44. (In English: 'French-style fascism, or fascism nowhere to be found', in Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Antisemitism and Fascism in France* (Stanford, 1998)); Serge Berstein, 'La France des années 30 allergique au fascisme: à propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell', *Vingtième Siècle*, 2 (April 1984), 83-94; Jacques Julliard, 'Sur un fascisme imaginaire, à propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell', *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, XXXIX, 4 (July-August 1984), 449-61. The most significant articles by non-French historians are: Antonio Costa Pinto, 'Fascist ideology revisited: Zeev Sternhell and his critics', *European History Quarterly*, 4, 16 (1986), 465-80; Francesco Germinario, 'Fascisme et idéologie fasciste: Problèmes historiographiques et méthodologiques dans le modèle de Zeev Sternhell', *Revue d'histoire des idées politiques*, 1 (1st sem. 1995), 39-79.

<sup>1060</sup> 'Sternhell, Zeev: Socialisme n'égale pas fascisme', *Le Monde*, (11-12 March 1984), 10.

<sup>1061</sup> Zeev Sternhell, Shlomo Sand, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 'Correspondance', *Esprit*, 12 (Dec. 1983), 189-95.

<sup>1062</sup> Sternhell's book inspired the colloquium organised by the Club de l'Horloge (neo-liberal wing of the French New Right) on 26 and 27 November 1983 and published as *Socialisme et fascisme: une même famille?* (Paris, 1984).

<sup>1063</sup> The action was brought forward by Bertrand de Jouvenel against Sternhell in 1983-4.

<sup>1064</sup> Magali Balent, 'La réception des thèses de Zeev Sternhell par les historiens français' (Master's thesis, Université Pierre Mendès France, 1997). Magali Balent argues that Sternhell's thesis challenged national identity.

<sup>1065</sup> Germinario, 'Fascisme et idéologie fasciste: Problèmes historiographiques et méthodologiques dans le modèle de Zeev Sternhell', 57.

<sup>1066</sup> William Irvine, *The Boulanger affair reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangisme, and the origins of the radical right in France* (Oxford, 1989); Robert Soucy, *French fascism, the first wave (1924-1933)* (New Haven, 1986); Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: the second wave (1933-1939)* (New Haven, 1995). Soucy approaches the question of fascism as an empiricist, rather than on the field of ideas (like proponents of the 'immunity thesis' and Sternhell too). One should also mention Robert Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism* (New York, 2004).

<sup>1067</sup> It is not possible to list here all the developments that have occurred in the field since the 1980s. For an excellent overview of the question, see the essays in Michel Dobry (ed.) *Le mythe de l'allergie française au fascisme* (Paris, 2003).

<sup>1068</sup> The most well-known book by a French historian on the question remains Michel Winock, *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris, 2004). (also translated by Jane Marie Todd, Stranford, 1998) Winock does not clearly define his concept of fascism, and holds to the belief that fascism ultimately remained weak in France.

<sup>1069</sup> This is clear in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*.

Sternhell's argument, I submit that what remains controversial in the 'Sternhell controversy' is directly linked with personalism.

### ***Fascisme à la française: a debate concerning personalism***

In 1983, *Ni droite, ni gauche* initiated the debate on a *fascisme à la française*, playing a role not dissimilar to Robert Paxton's work regarding collaboration under Vichy.<sup>1070</sup> Sternhell's definition of fascism was, admittedly, extremely broad.<sup>1071</sup> He described the 'essence of fascism' as 'a synthesis of organic nationalism and anti-Marxist socialism, a revolutionary ideology based on a simultaneous rejection of liberalism, Marxism, and democracy'.<sup>1072</sup> 'In its essential character, Sternhell continued, the fascist ideology was a rejection of "materialism" and it aimed at bringing about a total spiritual revolution.'<sup>1073</sup> This statement implied two audacious conclusions, and a series of implications. Firstly, Sternhell asserted that fascism developed in France 'a good twenty years before similar ideologies appeared elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Italy'.<sup>1074</sup> Secondly, he described French fascist ideology as 'closest to the ideal, the "idea" of fascism in the Weberian sense of the term'.<sup>1075</sup>

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<sup>1070</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche, l'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, first edn. 1983), translated by David Maisel: *Neither right nor left, Fascist ideology in France* (Berkeley, 1986). Robert Paxton, *Vichy France, Old guard and new order, 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), translated as *La France de Vichy (1940-1944)* (Paris, Seuil, 1973); Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus, *Vichy et les juifs* (Paris, Calman Lévy, 1981). For an early revisionist article on French fascism: Raoul Girardet, 'Notes sur l'esprit d'un fascisme français', *Revue française de science politique* (July-September 1955), 529-546.

<sup>1071</sup> Sternhell wrote: 'My definition of fascism is a broad one, even broader, in many respects, than Nolte's. It lays the main emphasis on the rejection of 'materialism', while Nolte insists on the character of fascism as a "resistance to transcendence"', in Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, 309n4. Cf. Ernst Nolte's 'fascist minimum' in Ernst Nolte, *Three faces of fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York, 1966), 9, 429-34.

<sup>1072</sup> Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, 27.

<sup>1073</sup> Zeev Sternhell, 'Sur le fascisme et sa variante française', *Le Débat*, 32 (Nov. 1984), 29.

<sup>1074</sup> Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, 27. Page 29, he added 'where the history of ideas is concerned, the First World War was not the major break it was in so many other spheres.'

<sup>1075</sup> Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, 26-7.



Sternhell's method – to look for an 'ideal-type' fascism – has been violently attacked in the 1980s, challenged in the 1990s, and is perhaps now best avoided.<sup>1076</sup> However, the question of method, important though it may be, does not encompass all the considerations involved in the 'Sternhell controversy'. Sternhell's fascism has been called 'imaginary' and 'nowhere to be found' because it did not take any notice of social history.<sup>1077</sup> Today, it is clear that this critique aimed at discrediting Sternhell's subject (and discipline) by suggesting that social and institutional history is the only worthwhile history. Yet, there remains the question of a French immunity to fascism. The 'immunity thesis' (famously developed by René Rémond and refined by another generation of historians) alleged that France remained immune to the appeal of fascism between the wars.<sup>1078</sup> It has been repeatedly proved to be a myth: France was not more immune than any other European country.<sup>1079</sup>

Sternhell has responded by radicalising his argument. The final edition of his *Ni droite ni gauche* makes vindictory claims: not only were anti-democratic values common in 1930s France, but they underpinned one of the 'purest' fascist ideologies (i.e. intellectually), a genuine fascist mass movement (the Croix de Feu), and an authentic fascist regime (Vichy).<sup>1080</sup> As far as personalism is concerned, only the first issue matters: the intellectual underpinnings of fascism. The 'Sternhell controversy' raised a final question: how are we to

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<sup>1076</sup> See the violent polemic of Berstein, 'La France des années 30 allergique au fascisme: à propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell'; Philippe Burrin, 'La France dans le champ magnétique des fascismes', *Le Débat*, 32 (Nov. 1984); Winock, 'Fascisme à la française ou fascisme introuvable?' Since the publication of Michel Dobry's 1989 article (see following note), the term of 'allergie' has been avoided. In the 1990s, see Germinario, 'Fascisme et idéologie fasciste: Problèmes historiographiques et méthodologiques dans le modèle de Zeev Sternhell'.

<sup>1077</sup> See esp. Burrin, 'La France dans le champ magnétique des fascismes', 54-5, 72; Julliard, 'Sur un fascisme imaginaire, à propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell'; Sand, 'L'idéologie fasciste en France'; 'Sternhell, Zeev: Socialisme n'égale pas fascisme'; Winock, 'Fascisme à la française ou fascisme introuvable?' For a similar criticism of a later book by Sternhell, *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste* (Paris, Fayard, 1989), see Jean-Luc Pouthier, 'Zeev Sternhell II', *Esprit*, 6 (June 1989).

<sup>1078</sup> The term 'thèse immunitaire' was first used by Michel Dobry in an article 'Février 1934 et la découverte de l'allergie de la société française à la "Révolution fasciste"', *Revue française de sociologie*, XXX, 3-4, July-December 1989, 511-33; now in English: Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 129-50. Michel Dobry has explained the contexts and contents of his argumentation, over fifteen years of debate: see his 'Avant-Propos' and 'La thèse immunitaire face aux fascismes. Pour une critique de la logique classificatoire', in Dobry (ed.) *Le mythe de l'allergie française au fascisme*, 7-67.

<sup>1079</sup> Brian Jenkins has given a recent general introduction to the critique of the 'immunity thesis' in historical context, in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 1-21. This book is a collection of old (1989) and new articles featuring the big names of revisionist historians of fascism: Zeev Sternhell, Robert Soucy, Robert Paxton, Michel Dobry, and Kevin Passmore. The latter gives a new sociological approach to the question, by criticizing the stalemate society thesis.

<sup>1080</sup> Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche*. Also in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, esp.35-56.

interpret the status of the anti-parliamentary third way? I submit guidelines for an answer in the following section.

Ten years ago, Michel Trebitsch put forth a socio-historical interpretation of the ‘Sternhell controversy’, which contributes to explain why personalism is crucial to the debate.<sup>1081</sup> According to him, Sternhell aimed his criticism at the ‘Sciences Po-Le Seuil-*Esprit*’ configuration (namely René Rémond, Jean-François Sirinelli, and Michel Winock), which dominated French political history in the 1980s, following the decline of the *Annales* School. Sternhell has indirectly approved Trebitsch’s interpretation in his new introduction to *Ni droite ni gauche*.<sup>1082</sup> If this interpretation is correct, the indignation following Sternhell’s book was not so much a national reaction to a perceived foreign attack (as in the case of Paxton’s *Vichy France*), but rather a reluctance to admit the cloudiness of Emmanuel Mounier’s attitude, among others. Mounier remains a tutelary figure in France, and in the Catholic world more generally. The case for Mounier’s beatification is currently being considered in Rome. At the same time, there have been attempts to discredit him: Mounier has been called a ‘Heidegger français’.<sup>1083</sup> This is to say that the position of French personalists vis-à-vis fascism is an important and controversial issue in France.

For all the polemic, Sternhell has not been disarmed. The last chapter of *Ni droite ni gauche* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.) was entirely devoted to the ‘Tentation fasciste’ of the personalists.<sup>1084</sup> And one of his latest articles gives the ‘Lettre à Hitler’ and Mounier’s attitude under Vichy as ‘deux exemples particulièrement édifiants aussi bien de la tentation fasciste et nazie que de la

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<sup>1081</sup> Trebitsch, ‘Le front commun de la jeunesse intellectuelle. Le “Cahier de revendications” de décembre 1932’, 222.

<sup>1082</sup> See English translation in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 22-64, esp. note 56. Magali Balent has confirmed that French historians functioned as a ‘corporation’ (in Sirinelli’s own expression), determined to preserve its legitimacy, see Balent, ‘La réception des thèses de Zeev Sternhell par les historiens français’, 130.

<sup>1083</sup> Fumaroli called Mounier the ‘Heidegger français’ and falsely accused of being ‘ministre de la Culture de Vichy’. In Marc Fumaroli, *L’Etat culturel. Essai sur une religion moderne* (Paris, 1991), 91-113. In the same genre, and even less historically sound: Bernard-Henry Lévy’s *L’idéologie française* (Paris, 1981).

<sup>1084</sup> Zeev Sternhell, ‘La tentation fasciste. 1. Emmanuel Mounier et la contestation de la démocratie libérale. 2. Les personnalistes de l’*Ordre Nouveau* face au phénomène nazi’, Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche. L’idéologie fasciste en France*, 304-42. Sternhell mentions Rougemont only once to say that Mounier visited him in Frankfurt.

puissance du réflexe de refoulement [...] par les personnalistes.’<sup>1085</sup> Let us consider the case of ON separately from that of *Esprit*.

## Ordre Nouveau

‘Lettre à Hitler’, published in *L’Ordre Nouveau* in November 1933, is an equivocal text indeed.<sup>1086</sup> It is divided into three parts. It starts with a list of the ‘Victoires national-socialistes’, finding ‘une grandeur authentique’ in Hitler’s critique of liberal democracy and capitalism.<sup>1087</sup> The authors congratulated Hitler for having swept away the Weimar Republic, and stated: ‘Vous avez mis fin à un mensonge. Celui de la démocratie libérale.’<sup>1088</sup> It has been argued that the first part was only meant to allow the journal to pass Nazi censorship (which it failed to do). One may admit that the point of the letter lay in the two latter parts. The second part criticized the ‘Défaites national-socialistes’ (namely the idolization of the Nation, the Party, the Masses, and Work).<sup>1089</sup> Racism was rejected: ‘cette idole pseudo-scientifique qui éveille à la fois l’horreur et le rire: la race, telle que la conçoivent et l’adorent vos sous-Gobineau en chemises brunes.’<sup>1090</sup> The third part presented ON as the incarnation of French youth and summoned Hitler to listen to revolutionary France. One day, ON threatened, ‘vous serez obligé ou bien de renoncer à *votre* rêve d’autarchie, ou bien de laisser éclater le conflit sanglant dont le choc en retour vous balaierait.’<sup>1091</sup> It is all too easy to condemn this publication as anti-democratic and anti-materialist, therefore deeply penetrated by fascism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1085</sup> Zeev Sternhell, ‘Le fascisme, ce “mal du siècle”...’ in Michel Dobry (ed.) *Le mythe de l’allergie française au fascisme* (Paris, 2003), 394.

<sup>1086</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 5 (15 Nov. 1933), 3-32. Also extracts as Annex 1 (to support Sternhell’s argumentation), in Dobry (ed.) *Le mythe de l’allergie française au fascisme*, 407-15.

<sup>1087</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 8-14.

<sup>1088</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 8.

<sup>1089</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 15-22.

<sup>1090</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 20.

<sup>1091</sup> ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 23-32.

<sup>1092</sup> Sternhell also quotes the reservations (‘Un abîme nous sépare.’) expressed in the ‘Lettre à Hitler’, but they remain superficial for him: ‘on apprécie la profondeur de la pénétration fasciste’; and ‘finalement, il est clair que l’objection essentielle que ces hommes opposent à Hitler se réduit à déplorer que son mouvement n’ait pas su traduire en actes ses idées et n’ait pas été capable de tirer toutes les conclusions de sa grande révolte contre le matérialisme.’, in Sternhell, ‘Le fascisme, ce “mal du siècle”...’, 396.

But such an approach does not allow us to understand what the actual purpose of the ‘Lettre’ was.

To put the ‘Lettre à Hitler’ in perspective, we may first note the sheer presumption of the author(s).<sup>1093</sup> The authorship itself has been contested, but not as one might have thought. In the 1980s, Marc wrote to Rougemont: ‘je crois avoir été à l’origine de l’idée même de cette Lettre et que – l’idée initiale une fois acceptée par t[ou]s (semble-t-il), j’en ai assuré l’exécution, dans la proportion d’au moins 50%. Responsabilité que je n’assume pas seulement, mais que je revendique, car j’en suis fier.’<sup>1094</sup> Marc was shocked by accusations of ‘philo-fascisme’, which he thought completely missed the point.<sup>1095</sup> Whether it was a proto-fascist publication or not, and whether Rougemont was involved or not,<sup>1096</sup> it is most fruitful to recognise that the author(s) attempted to compete with fascists and nazis on their own territory.<sup>1097</sup> The ‘Lettre à Hitler’ remains astonishing for the self-confidence of the author(s): they seemed to think that Hitler (as anyone else in Germany) ought to listen, and to follow the ON revolution.

After nearly ten years of research, Roy and Keller both came to the conclusion that the ON attempted to *export* its personalist revolution to Germany (in particular through contacts

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<sup>1093</sup> Page two indicates: ‘Ce numéro a été rédigé par: Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley, Daniel-Rops, René Dupuis, Jean Jardin et Denis de Rougemont.’ ‘Lettre à Hitler’, 2.

<sup>1094</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 11 Feb. 1981, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>1095</sup> Marc to Rougemont, 11 Feb. 1981, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, Correspondence.

<sup>1096</sup> Despite indication to the contrary, Rougemont may not have been involved in the publication, because he was away from Paris that year (staying on Ré island) and was only informed of ON’s decisions in writing and with a certain delay (as his correspondence shows). In this respect, I think, like Ackermann, that the letter to Hitler was a joint work which probably did not involve Rougemont. Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 262-3, 266. Jacob cannot be taken seriously on this point because he has done no research on Rougemont’s activities in the 1930s Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 116-17. Mary-Jo Deering and Christian Campiche, probably on the basis of Marc’s letter to Rougemont (quoted above), held that the ‘Lettre à Hitler’ had been written by Marc alone. Christian Campiche, *Denis de Rougemont, Le séducteur de l'Occident* (Chêne-Bourg, 2001), 26-7; Mary-Jo Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l'unité européenne* (Lausanne, 1991), 181. While Marc claimed Daniel-Rops was the other author, Daniel-Rops denied Marc’s involvement in a letter to Gabriel Marcel at the time. Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 407.

<sup>1097</sup> The case for an analysis in terms of competitive relations rather than *logique classificatoire* has been particularly well argued by Michel Dobry, esp. in his section on ‘the autonomisation of the non-parliamentary Right’, in Jenkins (ed.) *France in the era of fascism: essays on the French authoritarian right*, 141-3.

with Harro Schulze-Boysen, the leader of *Gegner*), and not the other way round.<sup>1098</sup> Roy has shown that an unpublished *Gegner* manifesto, written by Harro Schulze-Boysen in May 1932, copied much of the programme of the ON.<sup>1099</sup> It is also worth noting, in passing, that according to Denis de Rougemont, the term ‘new order’ used by Nazi propaganda might have been borrowed from *L’Ordre Nouveau* by Abetz and Ribbentrop, who were regular readers of the French journal.<sup>1100</sup> But this may also be an example of the sense of self-importance of ON members. Let it suffice to mention here that some of the ON texts were, to say the least, confusing.

To quote Rougemont’s most ambiguous text on Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, published in May 1933 (note the early date):

En face de deux pays gouvernés par des hommes de quarante ans, c’est-à-dire par les chefs de la jeunesse révolutionnaire, en face d’une Russie dont le dynamisme juvénile est assez puissant pour animer la plus sclérosée des doctrines étatiques, la France offre le spectacle de sa gérontocratie bavarde, de ses petites niaiseries parlementaires, de son ballet désuet : droite-gauche, gauche-droite... En face des jeunesses bottées, nu-tête, chemise ouverte dont notre presse aime à railler les uniformes, qu’avons nous à aligner ? Un attirail de faux-cols durs, de rosettes, de gros ventres et de chapeaux melons. La France n’est plus contemporaine des nations qui l’entourent et qui la menacent. Tel est le fait.<sup>1101</sup>

Rougemont’s provocative style is unmistakable. However, the ‘fact’ of the stalemated society was one of the most common assumptions in interwar France, in all political tendencies and social groups, as Kevin Passmore has recently argued.<sup>1102</sup> And the myth of the rejuvenation of ‘totalitarian’ regimes was present across the political spectrum. As Raymond Aron – whose liberal-democratic allegiance is indisputable – put it in a speech in Berlin in

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<sup>1098</sup> Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*. And Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*; Thomas Keller, 'Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier', in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L'actualité d'un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l'UNESCO* (Paris, 2003); Keller, 'Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres', esp. 470.

<sup>1099</sup> This is a key point for Hellman, who draws on the research of his former student Roy. Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 46-8, esp. acknowledgement of Roy’s contribution 46n90. Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 263-340.

<sup>1100</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 8.

<sup>1101</sup> Rougemont was answering a survey by Jean de Fabrègues on ‘La jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne nouvelle’, together with six members of the ON, three Jeune Droite writers, and one philo-communist writer. Denis de Rougemont, 'La jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne', *La Revue du siècle*, 2 (May 1933), 7. (The ‘rosettes’ refer to the Légion d’Honneur)

<sup>1102</sup> Passmore, 'The construction of crisis in interwar France', 151-99.

1933: the ‘totalitarian regimes are authentically revolutionary, [while] the democracies are essentially conservative’.<sup>1103</sup> In 1933, political opponents of fascism, such as Aron (and I shall argue Rougemont), accepted their rivals as genuine political adversaries.<sup>1104</sup>

Rougemont was answering a survey on ‘La Jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne nouvelle’, conducted by Jean de Fabrègues, who had partly fixed the terms of the debate for his right-wing *Revue du siècle*.<sup>1105</sup> In an article published in 2003, the American historian Samuel Kalman misread the above quotation from Rougemont as a ‘Valoissian note’ (he also misspelled ‘Denis de Rougement’ and got the source wrong).<sup>1106</sup> Kalman’s work is part of the ‘origins’ studies focusing on the *prehistory* of Vichy in the 1930s and earlier, as evident from the conclusion that inter-war French youth groups ‘*prefigured* a turn against republican orthodoxy’ and ‘*presaged* a complete transformation in France’.<sup>1107</sup> The notion of ‘prehistory’ in intellectual history is highly conducive to biased interpretations.

Even further of the mark is John Hellman’s latest book, *The communitarian third way: Alexandre Marc’s Ordre Nouveau*.<sup>1108</sup> In 1981, before the publication of *Ni droite ni gauche*, Hellman had pointed at Mounier’s ambivalence vis-à-vis fascism.<sup>1109</sup> Now turning to ON, Hellman presents Marc as an oxymoronic ‘Nietzschean anti-Hitler national socialist’, with the crooked logic that condemnation of communism came before ‘sophisticated critical analyses of the Nazis or the fascists’ and ‘so the enemies of their enemies became their

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<sup>1103</sup> Quoted in Orlow, ‘Fascists among themselves: some observations on West European politics in the 1930s’, 247.

<sup>1104</sup> See for example Rougemont’s answer to the survey on ‘La jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne nouvelle’, quoted above. Rougemont, ‘La jeunesse française devant l’Allemagne’, 7.

<sup>1105</sup> *La revue du siècle*, 2 (May 1933). For an analysis of this survey, see Nicolas Kessler, *Histoire politique de la Jeune Droite (1929-1942). Une révolution conservatrice à la française* (Paris, 2001), 270-83.

<sup>1106</sup> Samuel Kalman, ‘Faisceau visions of physical and moral transformation and the cult of youth in inter-war France’, *European History Quarterly*, XXXIII, 3 (2003). The quotation is from *La revue du siècle*, 2 (May 1933), and not from ‘the journal of the group Ordre Nouveau’ as Kalman wrote.

<sup>1107</sup> Kalman, ‘Faisceau visions of physical and moral transformation and the cult of youth in inter-war France’, 362-3. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>1108</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*.

<sup>1109</sup> Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the new Catholic left, 1930-1950*, esp. 71-95. For the Vichy period Hellman, *The knight-monks of Vichy France*.

friends.<sup>1110</sup> ‘Personalist communitarianism’ – note the emphasis on ‘communitarianism’ – had been ‘originally intended to help engender a “New Middle Ages” in which the French and other Europeans could husband aspects of their spiritual heritage in a German-dominated New Order’.<sup>1111</sup> Confusion, oversimplification, and utter falsehood invalidate what could otherwise have been an interesting analysis of personalism through the trajectory of Alexandre Marc, from 1930 to 2000.

The category of ‘non-conformism’ is infinitely elastic for Hellman. It includes: ‘Rougemont, Marc and [Jacques] Delors as builders of a united Europe’; Hubert Beuve-Méry (leader of the Uriage school under Vichy and founder of the newspaper *Le Monde* after the war); François Mitterrand (a ‘right-wing non-conformist’); and Charles de Gaulle.<sup>1112</sup> The book has a clear polemical purpose, as evident from his Chapter 8 which attacks: the ‘communitarian’ cast at the ‘Editions du Seuil’; the newspaper *Le Monde*; the ‘discreetly politicized French academic establishment’; and last but not least the pontificate of John Paul II, ‘personalist philosopher ... and benevolent authoritarian’.<sup>1113</sup> A reviewer has suggested that the fundamental goal of the book is ideological:<sup>1114</sup> to denounce how ‘modern Catholicism was altered by the invention of fascism’<sup>1115</sup> (the consequences of which Hellman claims, incidentally, to have witnessed in Quebec).<sup>1116</sup>

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<sup>1110</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 4-5. Full quotation of page 4 on Marc: ‘Anti-Bolshevik Russian exile, Germanophile Jewish convert to Catholicism, Marc would come to embarrass his old comrades by steadfastly maintaining that the non-conformism which he would be instrumental in maintaining had... German origins. This Nietzschean anti-Hitler national socialist would claim that Europe owed far more to the conservative revolution than had been admitted. Evoking “pure”, “original”, national socialism – a generational experience for a “magnificent youth” in Germany, and a fortunate few in France, tragically betrayed by Hitler – Marc would stick out for revealing a family secret well-known to the initiated: the new, fresh, constructive national-socialism had deeply and permanently influenced a European elite.’ To put things right, one should refer to Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 408-9 n.60.

<sup>1111</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 3.

<sup>1112</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 9.

<sup>1113</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 190-2.

<sup>1114</sup> Kathryn E. Amdur, in *The American Historical Review*, vol.108, 5, available on [www.historicalcooperative.org/journals/ahr/108.5/br\\_131.html](http://www.historicalcooperative.org/journals/ahr/108.5/br_131.html). Last viewed 5 Feb. 2004.

<sup>1115</sup> Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 190.

<sup>1116</sup> A footnote explains his views on Quebec nationalism: ‘Canadian non-conformism, like that of Vichy France, assumed French Catholic cultural pre-eminence in a multicultural, pluralist society’, in Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 208n8.

In a recent conference, Hellman expressed his historiographical (as opposed to polemical) target more clearly than I have found in the book: he denounced how ‘French scholars were stirring around taboos’.<sup>1117</sup> This statement is intended as an attack on the ‘Rémond school thesis’ of France’s virtual immunity from fascism, as if it had not been revised since the 1960s.<sup>1118</sup> As Julian Jackson has shown, studies of Vichy France, French fascism, and anti-semitism, have grown exponentially since the 1980s.<sup>1119</sup> Jackson suggests at least three problems with the idea that the French are still unwilling to ‘face up’ to their past: the comment is clichéd, condescending, and simply false.<sup>1120</sup> There is no ‘Hellman controversy’ because the debate concerning *fascisme à la française* has changed since the ‘Sternhell controversy’.

### *Esprit*

Since the ‘immunity thesis’ has been proved to be exceedingly biased, the political history of *Esprit* by Michel Winock (reissued in 1996) is out of date: Winock sticks to his old benevolent view that Mounier went from pacifism – until 1936 – to unwavering fight against the fascist threat following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>1121</sup> *Esprit*, like the rest of France, was no more immune to fascism than it was to communism.<sup>1122</sup> However, following Michel Dobry, one must resist binary classification.<sup>1123</sup> To say that *Esprit* was not immune to fascism is not to say that *Esprit* was fascist.

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<sup>1117</sup> John Hellman, ‘Remembering Vichy: The taboos of the French historians’, Paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, 50th annual conference, Paris, BNF, 19 June 2004.

<sup>1118</sup> Consider esp. Hellman, *The communitarian third way*, 189-90.

<sup>1119</sup> Julian Jackson, *France, The dark years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001), esp. 1-20.

<sup>1120</sup> Jackson, *France, The dark years*, esp. vii.

<sup>1121</sup> Michel Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950* (2nd edn. Paris, 1996), esp. 130-4.

<sup>1122</sup> On the postwar period, see Pierre Grémion, ‘Mounier et *Esprit* dans l’après-guerre’, in Guy Coq (ed.) *Emmanuel Mounier, L’actualité d’un grand témoin. Actes du colloque tenu à l’UNESCO* (Paris, 2003), 93-109. The thesis of Goulven Boudic (forthcoming) should explain further the political tensions that existed at *Esprit*. Already published: Goulven Boudic, ‘La tension réforme-révolution : à propos d’*Esprit*’, *Esprit*, III-IV, 251 (March 1999), 146-54. See also his notes in the edition of the diaries of Jean-Marie Domenach (editor of *Esprit*, 1957-77), Goulven Boudic and Nicole Domenach (eds), *Jean-Marie Domenach, Beaucoup de gueule et peu d’or : journal d’un réfractaire : 1944-1977* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>1123</sup> See Dobry (ed.) *Le mythe de l’allergie française au fascisme*, esp.44-50.



Thinking in terms of a competitive logic, one can grasp better the character of Mounier's ambivalent statements towards fascism. In the mid-1930s, Mounier denounced fascism as 'la plus dangereuse démission qui nous soit aujourd'hui proposée';<sup>1124</sup> at the same time, he found seductive elements in fascism by comparison with 'disorderly' liberal democracies.<sup>1125</sup> With regard to Mounier and some other personalists, the historian of French fascism, Philippe Burrin, was right to describe a 'fascination' towards fascism until 1936 at least (and indeed 'fascistization' in the early years of Vichy).<sup>1126</sup>

Burrin has developed a model of a 'nébuleuse fascistoïde', which places the various 'non-conformistes des années trente' along concentric circles forming a magnetic field of fascism. According to this model, writers of 'Jeune Droite', technocrats of *X-Crise*, and dissidents of the Radical and Socialist parties were more prone to be drawn in than personalists, who formed the most remote circle around the fascist core.<sup>1127</sup> However, this model is somewhat anachronistic. Why should all the political movements of the 1930s be set against the 'measure' of fascism? The magnetic field model suggests *a posteriori* that personalists were dependent upon fascism. But this is certainly not how personalists saw it at the time. In the early 1930s at least, personalists thought they had good chances in the competition with other third way movements, of which fascism was but an avatar.

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<sup>1124</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, 'Des pseudo-valeurs spirituelles fascistes: Prise de position', *Esprit*, 16 (Jan. 1934), 535.

<sup>1125</sup> Here it is important to quote at length. This passage has often been truncated and only the full quote can give a faithful impression of Mounier's position towards fascism: 'Il faudrait que nos optimistes libéraux se le tiennent une fois pour dit : on ne combat pas une mystique avec une mystique de rang inférieur, on ne combat pas l'explosion fasciste avec de larmoyantes fidélités démocratiques, avec des élections qui n'ont même pas la force de déplacer un Préfet de police, avec des indignations de sédentaires. Il y a une tentation fasciste aujourd'hui sur le monde entier. Tentation de facilité : quand on n'y voit plus clair du tout, quand on n'en peut plus, quand le monde devient si obscur et si lourd, ah ! qu'il est commode de mettre tout le paquet dans les mains d'un homme, d'attendre les mots d'ordre et d'y obéir aveuglément sous l'alcool des discours héroïques ! Mais tentation de grandeur aussi : le désordre en tout, le désordre partout – vivement de la propreté, de l'énergie, quelque hauteur, de l'ordre. Notre rôle n'est pas seulement de détourner de la facilité, mais de satisfaire cet âpre désir de grandeur qui va s'engouffrant dans des chemins mortels.' Mounier, 'Des pseudo-valeurs spirituelles fascistes: Prise de position', 536.

<sup>1126</sup> Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive fasciste, Doriot, Déat, Bergery: 1933-1945* (Paris, 1986), 88-90, 340-1, 466 (on Mounier). 'Fascination' does not mean 'fascistization' (the term indicates approximation of fascism), nor does it imply para-fascist authoritarianism. Aristotle Kallis, "'Fascism", "para-fascism" and "fascistization": on the similarities of three conceptual categories', *European History Quarterly*, XXXIII, 2 (Apr. 2003), 219-49.

<sup>1127</sup> Burrin, *La Dérive fasciste, Doriot, Déat, Bergery: 1933-1945*, 26.

There is a concrete example of the competition between the French third ways and Italian Fascism. In 1935, Robert Aron, Claude Chevalley and René Dupuis (from the ON), with Mounier, André Ullmann and Louis-Emile Galey (from *Esprit*), and the right-wingers Jean de Fabrègues, Thierry Maulnier, Georges Roditi, and Paul Marion, all responded positively to an invitation by Mussolini's Fascist Institute for Culture to attend a congress on corporatism in Rome.<sup>1128</sup> This example is also interesting because it shows the reality of the ambiguities (against arguments of the purely 'theoretical' character of the personalist closeness to an 'imaginary' fascism<sup>1129</sup>). The competitive logic goes a long way towards explaining the personalists' trip to Rome. As historian of Fascism (*sensu stricto*) Philip Morgan has remarked, 'corporatism was one of the ways through which Italian Fascism gave itself an international profile and meaning, as a "third way" solution to the crisis of capitalism and parliamentary democracy.'<sup>1130</sup> Third ways, whether fascist or not, were in contact in the 1930s and 1940s, and these contacts were established in terms of competition, be it emulation, collaboration, or contest to the death.

### ***Ni droite ni gauche: non-conformism or ideological zigzags?***

There was a 'Sternhell controversy' in the 1980s because Sternhell raised important historical questions.<sup>1131</sup> One of them remains unanswered. Did the slogan '*ni droite ni gauche*' have any meaning, any consistency? In other words, was there a possibility of a third way apart from fascism?

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<sup>1128</sup> See 'Esprit au Congrès franco-italien sur la corporation', *Esprit*, 33 (June 1935), 474-80. This report of the Rome Symposium was unsigned but it has been attributed to Mounier in his *Oeuvres* (Vol.4), 844.

<sup>1129</sup> See Julliard, 'Sur un fascisme imaginaire, à propos d'un livre de Zeev Sternhell'; Winock, 'Fascisme à la française ou fascisme introuvable?'

<sup>1130</sup> Philip Morgan, 'Fascism in general and Fascism in particular', *Contemporary European history*, XII, 1 (2003), 110. See also Philip Morgan, "'The Party is everywhere": the Italian Fascist Party in economic life, 1926-1940', *The English historical review*, CXIV, 455 (1999).

<sup>1131</sup> Before Sternhell, Bernard-Henri Lévy had raised the question of the leftist origins of fascism in France, in *L'idéologie française* (Paris, 1981), but lack of historical evidence and misleading confusions had discouraged academic debate. Bernard-Henri Lévy misleadingly associated Denis de Rougemont with notorious fascists. Rougemont sued a reviewer of Lévy's book for libel and won the trial, see Pierre Verdaguer, 'Denis de Rougemont et la nouvelle censure', *The French review*, LIX, 2 (Dec. 1985). Correspondence between Seth Wolitz and Pierre Verdaguer, *The French review*, LIX, 6 (May 1986), 958-9; and Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 493-5.

The ‘neither right nor left’ slogan has been questioned in two ways. For Sternhell, the third way in 1930s Europe was fascist in essence, and so those who claimed to be ‘neither right nor left’ were covertly proto-fascists. This is not unlike the second line of argument, already submitted in the 1930s, that ‘neither right nor left’ was a slogan which *actually* hid a rallying to the right (rarely to the left). The third way is obviously a recurring theme in history. Why could it have no credibility in the 1930s?

A first answer seems to lie in the ideological zigzags of many of those who claimed to be ‘neither right nor left’, but went from right to left, and left to right. These zigzags have been studied in Germany and in France: in both countries, the quest for a ‘third way’ led many thinkers from one extreme to the other.<sup>1132</sup> To mention French examples only, Nizan, Lamour, Borne, and Gandillac were initially close to Valois’s Faisceau or the Action Française, before becoming leftists (like Valois himself). Others, such as Déat, Bergery, Delaisi, and Luchaire crossed the floor of party politics in the opposite direction. In the protagonists’ terms, these ideological zigzags were justified by the claim that political cleavages were obsolete. In studying personal trajectories, it is important to ask whether there was continuity or rupture in the values defended.

Then, one may ask why certain values should be classified on the right or on the left. Why, for instance, should patriotism be intrinsically right-wing? Or the defence of nature left-wing? Jean Jacob, in his study of the ecological movement in France, has shown the continuity of personalist themes from the ‘non-conformisme des années trente’ (neither right nor left), through anti-communism (and therefore the right) in the postwar period, to the student revolt of May 1968 (and therefore the left), and finally some extreme fringes of the European right today.<sup>1133</sup>

There is no reason why research should be directed by Alain’s saying: ‘Prétendre qu’il faut dépasser l’opposition droite gauche, refuser de se classer à droite ou à gauche, c’est être

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<sup>1132</sup> Gilbert Merlio (ed.) *Ni gauche, ni droite: les chassés-croisés idéologiques des intellectuels français et allemands dans l’entre-deux-guerres* (Talence, 1995).

<sup>1133</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L’Ordre Nouveau"*. See below for a critical assessment of his views on personalism.

de droite.<sup>1134</sup> This commonplace has been denounced by the former personalist Jacques Ellul.<sup>1135</sup> To say ‘Qui dit ni droite, ni gauche est de droite’ presupposes that politics are inescapable: ‘La politique, c’est le Tout. Droite gauche, c’est en vérité la *summa divisio* entre les hommes : tous doivent y être inclus. Celui qui prétend y échapper ou nie cette vérité, c’est un ennemi.’<sup>1136</sup> Admittedly, on a given question, one is always on the right of some, and on the left of others. Yet this contrast is between persons, on a particular topic, and it is relative in time. Any tendency to reify or artificially systematize the right left divide in politics detracts from understanding personalism in France in the 1930s.

It is essential to remember the diversity of personal trajectories. We have seen that *Esprit* turned towards the left following the riots of February 1934.<sup>1137</sup> It supported the Popular Front in 1936, and then several of *Esprit*’s contributors were collaborators at Vichy, while others resisted unto death.<sup>1138</sup> We have seen that the ON group (considered collectively) claimed to keep a ‘neither right, nor left’ policy throughout the 1930s. Why should the historian decide that it was a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ choice? In any case, it was not binding. During the Second World War, some former ON members entered the Resistance as early as June 1940 (chiefly Marc and Rougemont – although his case is special since he was in Switzerland), while others (Jardin, Loustau, and Gibrat) would play a key role in Vichy’s National Revolution. None of them had prophetic insights (contrary to what has sometimes been suggested).<sup>1139</sup> The ambivalences, concessions, competitions, resistances and fights of those, among the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’, who stayed in France during the

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<sup>1134</sup> Quoted in Jacques Ellul, *Exégèse des nouveaux lieux communs* (Paris, 2004), 212.

<sup>1135</sup> Ellul, *Exégèse des nouveaux lieux communs*, 212-16. Ellul adds: ‘Comme d’habitude en ces affaires, il faut quand même souligner quelques incohérences : nous avons dit que ce lieu commun est formulé par l’homme de gauche, mais il ne l’applique pas partout ni toujours ! Par exemple, lors des élections, il y a toujours un pourcentage d’abstentionnistes de 15 à 40% qui manifestent clairement leur décision de ne pas en prendre, et de ne se classer ni à droite ni à gauche. Mais à ce moment-là, l’homme de gauche oublie couramment son lieu commun, et se garderait bien de renvoyer à droite la masse des abstentionnistes !’, *Ibid.*, 213 n.1.

<sup>1136</sup> Ellul, *Exégèse des nouveaux lieux communs*, 216.

<sup>1137</sup> Cf. Chapter 3.

<sup>1138</sup> See the case of Paul-Ludwig Landsberg in Chapter 7.

<sup>1139</sup> Statements such as ‘sur ce point encore, A. Marc a donc fait preuve d’une lucidité prophétique, en prédisant, dès les années 30, la décomposition de la société soviétique, sous l’effet d’une idéologie a-morale [...]’ can only come from the daughter of the protagonist. Mireille Marc-Lipiansky, ‘Le personnalisme fédéraliste face au totalitarisme’, *L’Europe en formation*, 291 (Winter 1993-4), 23.

Second World War have been unravelled by Michel Bergès.<sup>1140</sup> Rougemont, who was in Switzerland and America in the 1940s, has not been studied by Bergès. We shall consider his case in the final section of this chapter.

This section on ‘neither right, nor left’ and ‘ideological zigzags’ has sought to show that it is fruitful to lay aside the thinking in binary categories, in order to try to recover the past in its complexity. The competitive approach is one way out of the endless controversy on *fascisme à la française*. Unfolding the full consequences of the refusal to think in neat categories has led some historians to reject the whole idea of a generic fascism. This does not help to understand how the doctrine of personalism came about in the same Europe as the Nazi and fascist phenomena. For those who think that it remains useful to study generic fascism, if only to understand the broader context in which personalism developed as a movement and as a doctrine, the following guidelines for the analysis of personalism(s) vis-à-vis fascism(s) may prove helpful.

## **2. Guidelines for the analysis of personalism(s) vis-à-vis fascism(s)**

This section shows how French personalists competed with fascists in the same arena, as it were, situated somewhere outside parliamentary politics. Since anyone working on fascism should declare his favourite definition, I choose Payne’s ‘working definition’ at this point.<sup>1141</sup> There can be no perfect generic definition, but Payne’s has the advantage of being broad and balanced. Payne is a representative of the ‘new genericist’ approach, which developed in the aftermath of the ‘Sternhell controversy’ and became established in the mid-1990s. Whereas previous attempts to define generic fascism were limited to a list of the so-called ‘antis’, the ‘new genericist’ approach acknowledges that fascism can also be

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<sup>1140</sup> Michel Bergès, *Vichy contre Mounier, Les non-conformistes face aux années 1940* (Paris, 1997), 313-71. Part III: ‘Le Non-conformisme des années 40’, Chapter 2: ‘L’Ambivalence du “non-conformisme”’ and Chapter 3: ‘Non-conformisme et fascisme’.

<sup>1141</sup> ‘Introduction. Fascism a Working definition’, in Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45* (London, 1995), 3-22.

characterised by common affirmations.<sup>1142</sup> A list of ‘antis’ is not enough to make a political programme; it was through ‘affirmative’ elements that fascism became an ideology.<sup>1143</sup> In what follows, I argue that personalism shared with fascism a series of resentments against the dominant societal forces of the twentieth century – what Stanley Payne calls ‘fascist negations’ – but at the same time opposed all the decisive fascist ‘affirmative’ goals and features.<sup>1144</sup>

## Common negations

Payne identified common points in ideology and goals, the ‘fascist negations’, and also common features in style and organisation.<sup>1145</sup> He suggested a ‘Typological description of fascism’ ‘for purposes of comparative analysis and definition’.<sup>1146</sup> In the following typology, the text is Payne’s, but the dots (•) and arrows (➤) are mine. The arrows draw attention to the common traits between fascism and personalism as generic phenomena. The dots mark different, if not opposite, points of view.

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<sup>1142</sup> Robert Paxton, ‘The five stages of fascism’, *Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998); Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*.

<sup>1143</sup> Orlow reviews various “‘positive” sides to fascism. Positive not in the sense of laudable, but “as a distinctive set of ambitions” for transforming and moulding societal life.’ They include: celebration of the nation, racism (but not necessarily anti-semitism), *Volksgemeinschaft*, and a specific ‘style’ of politics. See Orlow, ‘Fascists among themselves: some observations on West European politics in the 1930s’, 252-5.

<sup>1144</sup> Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*, 6-7, 11.

<sup>1145</sup> Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*, 3-22.

<sup>1146</sup> Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*, 7.

**Table 1. Typological description of fascism**

From S. G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45* (London, 1995), 7.  
(The dots and arrows are mine)

<p><b>Ideology and goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Espousal of an idealist, vitalist, and voluntaristic philosophy, normally involving the attempt to realize a new modern self-determined and secular culture</li><li>• Creation of a new nationalist authoritarian state not based on traditional principles or models</li><li>• Organisation of a new highly regulated, multiclass, integrated national economic structure, whether called national corporatist, national socialist, or national syndicalist</li><li>• Positive evaluation and use of, or willingness to use, violence and war</li><li>• The goal of empire, expansion, or a radical change in the nation's relationship with other powers</li></ul>
<p><b>The Fascist negations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Antiliberalism</li><li>• Anticommunism</li><li>• Anticonservatism (though with the understanding that fascist groups were willing to undertake temporary alliances with other sectors, most commonly with the right)</li></ul>
<p><b>Style and organisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attempted mass mobilisation with militarization of political relationships and style and with the goal of a mass party militia</li><li>• Emphasis on aesthetic structure of meetings, symbols, and political liturgy, stressing emotional and mystical aspects</li><li>• Extreme stress on the masculine principle and male dominance, while espousing a strong organic view of society</li><li>• Exaltation of youth above other phases of life, emphasising the conflict of generations, at least in effecting the initial transformation</li><li>• Specific tendency toward an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command, whether or not the command is to some degree initially elective</li></ul>

This typology emphasises the similarities between the personalist objects of attack and the fascist negations. The three fascist negations coincide with personalist negations. Payne has remarked that as ‘latecomers’ (in Juan Linz’s phrase), movements that emerged after the First World War had to open new political and ideological space for themselves, and therefore were hostile to all the main currents (left, right, and centre).<sup>1147</sup> Personalists were in the position of ‘latecomers’ too. Like fascists, they built up a series of objections to the dominant societal forces of the time. In particular, Sternhell was right when he remarked that ‘anti-Marxism, anti-capitalism were the common denominator of all these different variants of the revolt and were a fitting expression of their essence, namely, the rejection of “materialism”’.<sup>1148</sup> Whether anti-materialism was (or is) the essence of fascism is another question.

<sup>1147</sup> Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*, 11.

<sup>1148</sup> See ‘Preface to the English edition’, Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, xvi.

Anticonservatism (the last negation) brings up the problematic issue of modernity and modernisation. The debate on fascism's relationship to modernity has been raging since the 1960s, and it is not my ambition to resolve it here. There is a combination of the 'old' and the 'new' both in fascist and personalist ideologies. One may suggest that personalism was a form of anticonservatism: it claimed to accomplish a 'permanent revolution'. One could also argue that personalists were conservative: they celebrated the pre-modern past.<sup>1149</sup> In fact, personalists wanted to have it both ways.<sup>1150</sup> They wanted to modernise society, but at the same time insisted on the timeless needs of the human person. One may remark that Marc Simard does not clarify the debate when he presents 'la révolte personaliste' as 'une des formes prises par la grande révolte antimoderne de l'entre-deux-guerres'.<sup>1151</sup> Simard defines 'l'antimodernisme' as the 'attitude ontologique de rejet de la société capitaliste-occidentale industrielle et de ses corollaires'.<sup>1152</sup> Therefore, his argument that personalism was 'antimoderne' simply means that personalism was a rejection of industrial capitalism and the market economy – a point that no one has ever questioned.

Two additional similarities between fascism and personalism *sensu lato* must be pointed out. In the category of ideology, the organisation of a new integrated economic structure may evoke personalists' plans for the economy (or part of the economy, according to the ON's dichotomy). Sternhell has argued that there was a direct connection between planism (in particular revisionist socialism) and fascism. However, it is important to remember here that the idea of planned economy enjoyed an immense vogue in the 1930s. Philippe Burrin and Olivier Dard have a point when they argue that the 'plan' could convey all sorts of values,

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<sup>1149</sup> A study of the influence of Berdiaev's essay on the *New Middle Ages* would be of considerable importance in this analysis. Nicolas Berdiaev, *Le nouveau Moyen Age* (Translated by Jean-Claude Marcadé and Sylviane Siger. Lausanne, 1985).

<sup>1150</sup> For instance, the criticism of technology by the 'Gascons' personalists and the personalist beginnings of ecology are complex issues, which would require further examination. See already Daniel Cerezuelle, 'La critique de la modernité chez Charbonneau. Aspects d'un compagnonage intellectuel', in Patrick Troude-Chastenet (ed.) *Sur Jacques Ellul* (Bordeaux-le-Bouscat, 1994), 63-74; Christian Roy, 'Aux sources de l'écologie politique: Le personalisme "gascon" de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul', *Canadian Journal of History*, 27 (Apr. 1992), 67-100.

<sup>1151</sup> Marc Simard, 'Intellectuels, fascisme et antimodernité dans la France des années trente', *Vingtième Siècle*, 18 (Apr.-June 1988), 59.

<sup>1152</sup> Simard, 'Intellectuels, fascisme et antimodernité dans la France des années trente', 56.



and that these values were more significant than the 'plan', simply considered as a tool.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the category of style and organisation, the exaltation of youth was never an exclusive property of fascism. It may be a common feature of 'revolutionary' movements at all times. Generational antagonism was widespread in the 1930s; many moderate republicans shared Rougemont's idea that France was no longer 'contemporaine' with its young neighbours.<sup>1154</sup>

It is interesting to note that, in order to describe personalism as 'a kind of outer circle around the hard core of fascist thought'<sup>1155</sup>, Sternhell had to limit his definition of fascism to the 'fascist negations', possibly associated with a stronger executive power (and a weaker legislative) and state planning of the economy.<sup>1156</sup>

## Contrary affirmations

Beyond similarities, there were irreducible differences between personalism and fascism. Personalism opposed the characteristics that Payne synthesised in his 'positive' definition: 'fascism may be defined as a form of revolutionary ultranationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilisation and the *Führerprinzip*, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normalize war and/or the military virtues.'<sup>1157</sup> ON was elitist in several ways; and yet personalists were against ultranationalism, vitalism, mass mobilisation and the cult of the leader. Personalists repeatedly condemned the fascists' 'style' of politics, especially mass meetings which stressed mystical aspects and collective sentiment.<sup>1158</sup> *Esprit* called for

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<sup>1153</sup> Burrin, 'La France dans le champ magnétique des fascismes', 54; Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète*, 187-9.

<sup>1154</sup> The thesis of the stalemate society has been taken for granted by much of the historiography, as Kevin Passmore has shown, in Passmore, 'The construction of crisis in interwar France', 151-99.

<sup>1155</sup> Sternhell, *Neither right, nor left: fascist ideology in France*, 217.

<sup>1156</sup> See Sternhell, 'Sur le fascisme et sa variante française', 29-30.

<sup>1157</sup> Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*, 14.

<sup>1158</sup> See below: section on Rougemont.

decolonisation as early as March 1933.<sup>1159</sup> While anti-semitism is by no means a prerequisite for fascism, it is the pride of *Esprit* that from 1933 the journal denounced the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.<sup>1160</sup> In *L'Ordre Nouveau* an anti-semitic note – the only one, as far as I am aware – appears in an article by Daniel-Rops.<sup>1161</sup> He expresses the xenophobia of many conservative Catholics at the time. And finally, Personalists called for a pluralistic state – unthinkable to any self-respecting fascist.<sup>1162</sup>

Besides the guidelines of the typology above, it would be interesting to contrast the ‘primacy of politics’ in the various fascisms with the personalist ‘primacy of the spiritual’. Admittedly, the fascist revolution was also directed at changing consciousness, but state power was deployed to change the economy and the class structure. By contrast, the personalist revolution could never come about by state intervention. In an unpublished note of 1938, Rougemont contrasted personalism, as a way of life, with fascism, as a political ideology: ‘Le pers.[onnalisme] est *une manière de vivre* dont il découle, secondairement, mais nécessairement, les conclusions politiques. Tandis que le fascisme est une politique au nom de laquelle on prétend imposer une certaine manière de vivre au peuple, aux individus, à vous-même.’<sup>1163</sup> This is a significant difference.

At ON, fascism was denounced as a ‘statolatry’, i.e. a form of political materialism under a thin spiritual veneer. As early as 1933, Marc and Dupuis expressed this view: ‘Le fascisme a prétendu libérer l’homme de l’esclavage du matérialisme, mais en faisant de l’Etat l’expression suprême de la vie matérielle et spirituelle de la nation, il réduit en fin de compte le spiritualisme qu’il prétendait incarner à un matérialisme détourné car la statolatrie, sous la forme absolue qu’il lui donne, n’est autre que la transposition politique du matérialisme.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1159</sup> See Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 92-3.

<sup>1160</sup> “La question juive”, *Esprit*, 8 (mai 1933), 153; see Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 91-2.

<sup>1161</sup> In a footnote: ‘Depuis quelques mois sévit en France une véritable profusion de magazines pornographiques ; la plupart appartiennent à une firme où figurent des émigrés juifs allemands.’ Daniel-Rops, ‘Ce qui meurt et ce qui naît’, *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 2nd year, 8 (15 Feb. 1934), 25n.1.

<sup>1162</sup> E. Mounier and G. de Santillana, ‘Dialogue sur l’Etat fasciste’, *Esprit*, 35-6 (September 1935), 725-36.

<sup>1163</sup> Manuscript note by Rougemont (on the back of an invitation for 28 Oct. 1938), Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: ‘Le personnalisme - Esprit’.

<sup>1164</sup> Marc and Dupuis, *Jeune Europe*, xx.

Idolatry of the state in fascism would justify Rougemont's interpretation of it as a religious surrogate.

In sum, personalists competed with fascists in the arena of antiparlamentarianism. They irreducibly opposed fascism on the question of the nationalism, on the state, and on the idea of central power. As Rougemont put it in 1938:

Si nous sommes anti-parlementaires, nous ne souffrirons pas qu'une paresse d'esprit voisine de la mauvaise foi nous assimile pour autant à un « fascisme » contre lequel toute la doctrine et l'attitude personaliste se dressent en une opposition irréductible, essentielle. [...] Nous sommes contre la centralisation, contre l'étatisme, contre le nationalisme étatisé, contre toute espèce de fascisme imité de Mussolini, d'Hitler ou de Staline, mais aussi contre toute espèce de fascisme « à la française ».<sup>1165</sup>

In 1938, intellectual laziness, if not *mauvaise foi*, put in one and the same box personalism and fascism, whether imported or indigenous, on the grounds that both were anti-parliamentarian. This classification detracted from the understanding of the stakes of the debate in the 1930s, as it does today.

Although it is useful to emphasise the common negations of personalism and fascism to see that they fought in the same arena, the risk of oversimplification remains great in any genericist enterprise. Ultimately, it may not be possible to understand how personalism functioned against fascism without going into details about particular types of personalism, if not the personalism of one particular author, at a given period. The case of Denis de Rougemont is revealing.

### **3. The case of Denis de Rougemont**

Denis de Rougemont's position vis-à-vis fascism has been exposed to two different sets of questions, which were answered either sympathetically or disapprovingly. While Bruno Ackermann has presented Rougemont's ideas as 'la vraie défense contre l'esprit

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<sup>1165</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne* (1st edn. Paris, 1938), 85.

totalitaire',<sup>1166</sup> Patrick Leuzinger has rejected Ackermann's conclusions because of Rougemont's 'engagement anti-libéral'.<sup>1167</sup> Conversely, François Saint-Ouen, a former partner of Rougemont at the Centre Européen de la Culture, has explored Rougemont's ideas as the 'origins' of post-1945 European federalism.<sup>1168</sup> Similarly examining personalism as the 'origins' of European federalism, Jean Jacob has reached opposite conclusions: he criticises Rougemont for his rejection of the nation-state, which he defines as 'partie liée avec la modernité'.<sup>1169</sup> I shall briefly review each point of view, showing how they partake of the debate on personalism as 'anti-totalitarian'/'anti-liberal', before trying to overcome the polemic by returning to primary sources.

## Ackermann vs. Leuzinger

In September 1933, Albert-Marie Schmidt (of the *Hic et Nunc* team), who worked as a French lector in Marburg an der Lahn, wrote to Rougemont on hearing that he was unemployed: 'J'apprends que le lecteur français de Francfort, atteint par la limite d'âge, se retire. Pouvez-vous vous faire recommander au professeur Lommatzch le romaniste, par des conférenciers français qui aient fait des conférences à Francfort ?'<sup>1170</sup> Eventually – after two years of unemployment, struggling in the French provinces –<sup>1171</sup> Rougemont ended up as a French lector in Frankfurt. Bruno Ackermann has explored the various reasons why Rougemont agreed to spend an academic year in Nazi Germany (1935-6), an experience

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<sup>1166</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'La vraie défense contre l'esprit totalitaire', *Les Cahiers protestants*, 22, 7 (Nov. 1938). This is the title of a section in Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 561-7, see also 445-515.

<sup>1167</sup> Patrick Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral' (Mémoire pour l'obtention du diplôme de la Faculté de Lettres, University of Geneva, Institut européen, 1996).

<sup>1168</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Inédits* (Neuchâtel, 1988), 7-21; Denis de Rougemont and François Saint-Ouen (eds), *Dictionnaire international du fédéralisme* (Brussels, 1994); François Saint-Ouen, *Denis de Rougemont. Introduction à sa vie et son oeuvre* (Geneva, 1995); François Saint-Ouen, 'Les personalistes: Denis de Rougemont et Alexandre Marc', *Les grandes figures de la construction européenne* (Geneva, 1997).

<sup>1169</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 7.

<sup>1170</sup> Albert-Marie Schmidt to Rougemont, 24 Sept. 1933, BPUN, Neuchâtel, Rougemont Papers, file: 'Hic et Nunc, II'.

<sup>1171</sup> See Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 2, 897-906; Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 409-44; Rougemont, *Journal d'un intellectuel*.

which he recorded in his *Journal d'Allemagne* (1938).<sup>1172</sup> Ackermann recalled the fact that Ionesco once suggested that his *Rhinocéros* (1959) had been inspired by Rougemont's description of a Nazi meeting in *Journal d'Allemagne*, and thus, 'le *Journal d'Allemagne*, comme *Rhinocéros*, vingt ans plus tard, sont des tentatives de démystification des idéologies totalitaires.'<sup>1173</sup> I share Ackermann's analysis of Rougemont's attitude towards fascism, with two reservations.

The first is more a nuance than a substantial criticism. Ackermann suggests that Rougemont displayed clear-sightedness throughout his *Journal d'Allemagne*: 'ses observations décrivent avec une rare lucidité le climat de cette Allemagne nouvelle';<sup>1174</sup> and again: 'l'observateur parfois sentimental qu'est Rougemont demeure lucide.'<sup>1175</sup> This interpretation is too benevolent. For example, Rougemont was not clear-sighted as to racism. Rougemont reported the policy of different flats for 'non-Aryans' without a word of sympathy or revolt.<sup>1176</sup> One page of his *Journal d'Allemagne* refuted the idea of 'le Juif' in general: there were different types – 'ici-même, j'en distingue au moins trois espèces des plus diverses' – a European-liberal type, a Marxist type, and a capitalist type.<sup>1177</sup> Anti-semitism, to Rougemont, was a result of petit-bourgeois resentment of the success of Jewish capitalists. To quote the most ambiguous passage of his *Journal d'Allemagne* at length:

Mais la plupart de ceux [les Juifs] que l'on voit encore dans un café de la place de l'Opéra paraissent, il faut l'avouer, justifier les slogans grossiers de la propagande hitlérienne. Bedonnants et bagués, le cigare au milieu de la bouche, ils représentent le type vulgarisé du capitaliste insolent. Goebbels et les Führers locaux n'ont pas eu de peine à concentrer sur eux la haine envieuse que vouent les petits aux gros à l'intérieur des classes bourgeoises. Nul besoin de recourir à des faux manifestes, tels que les Protocoles des Sages de Sion : il suffisait de montrer du doigt ces ventres, et de

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<sup>1172</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 2, 907-14; Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 445-96. See also Denis de Rougemont, 'Francfort, 16 mars 1336 (sic)', *Esprit*, 43; Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 47-65.

<sup>1173</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 495.

<sup>1174</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 469.

<sup>1175</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 478.

<sup>1176</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 11-12.

<sup>1177</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 20.

rappeler aux parents humiliés que leurs enfants ne sont jamais les premiers dans une classe où se trouvent des Juifs...<sup>1178</sup>

Having interpreted anti-semitism as a form of petit-bourgeois jealousy in his *Journal d'Allemagne*, Rougemont dismissed it as secondary.<sup>1179</sup> It was not that he approved of anti-semitism – on the contrary – but he considered enthusiasm for the nation to be the greater threat.<sup>1180</sup> The anti-semitism of Nazi Germany was simply not a major concern for Rougemont, as indeed for many of his contemporaries.

By contrast, Rougemont showed concern for the Calvinist Church. He defended the Confessing Church (*Bekennniskirche*), following pastors Niemöller and Barth.<sup>1181</sup> So it is difficult to agree with Ackermann when he writes: ‘Denis de Rougemont adopte une apparente attitude de neutralité, qui est ici signe de lucidité et de discernement. L’on connaît son aversion, maintes fois dévoilée et sans retour, pour les régimes totalitaires. Pareille attitude de neutralité n’exclut toutefois pas, dans certaines pages, des appréciations toutes personnelles’.<sup>1182</sup> Rougemont was neither neutral nor wholly discerning as to the culture of Nazi Germany.

Regarding the imminent danger of an international conflagration however, Ackermann is right to call Rougemont clear-sighted. In 1935, in the first months of his stay in Nazi

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<sup>1178</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 21. This brings up the debate on the responsibility of the Jews, which I shall not go into here. Let it suffice to mention Leon Wieseltier’s view that the sources of anti-semitism are ‘not in Jewish achievement, but in the pitiful inability of certain political cultures to tolerate it; not in the Jewish insistence upon difference, but in the non Jewish insistence upon sameness.’ Quoted in Steven E. Aschheim, ‘Nazism, Culture and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil’, *New German Critique*, 70 (winter 1997), 121.

<sup>1179</sup> Rougemont also contributed to a joint publication, *Les Juifs*, from the Protestant point of view, along the themes of the vocation of Israel and of the ‘chosen people’: Denis de Rougemont, ‘Vocation et destin d’Israël’, in Daniel-Rops (ed.) *Les Juifs* (Paris, 1937). On this contribution (which followed Christopher Dawson especially), see Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 542-7.

<sup>1180</sup> Commenting on a novel by Kasimir Edschmid (pseudonym of Edward Schmidt (1890-1966), an important German expressionist writer), *Destin allemand*, Rougemont found ‘le vrai tragique de l’Allemagne actuelle’ in that it considered ‘le sort de l’homme que sous l’aspect de la nation [...] et l’on admettra bien, quelque opinion qu’on ait sur le point de vue raciste de l’auteur, qu’il est peu de problèmes plus graves pour notre avenir immédiat.’ Denis de Rougemont, ‘Kasimir Edschmid: Destin allemand’, *Esprit*, 32 (May 1935), 293.

<sup>1181</sup> e.g. Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 15-16, 58-63.

<sup>1182</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 478.

Germany, Rougemont depicted the thirst for war as inherent to the Nazi mentality.<sup>1183</sup> In January 1936, 'A propos d'une conversation avec un S.A.' corrects the judgement on *Mein Kampf* given in December 1935: 'Ce n'est pas une « autobiographie » mais un ouvrage de combat, comme son nom l'indique, et sa doctrine.'<sup>1184</sup> This suggests that Rougemont read *Mein Kampf* in December 1935: he was particularly well-informed for the time.

The second point on which I would like to make reservations is Ackermann's use of the concepts 'totalitaire' and 'totalitarisme'. There is no point rehearsing the problems inherent in the notion of 'totalitarianism' in general.<sup>1185</sup> It is Ackermann's interpretation that: 'Bien que les conditions historiques et géopolitiques qui régissent les expériences russes et allemandes soient différentes, les rapports que les deux régimes entretiennent avec la culture sont identiques et permettent ainsi à Rougemont de disséquer le mécanisme fatal des régimes totalitaires.'<sup>1186</sup> Even if one accepts Rougemont's understanding of 'culture', his description of the 'fatal' mechanism of 'totalitarian' regimes is informed by dubious premises concerning decay in history.<sup>1187</sup> I should like to recall two points here: how the concept of 'totalitarian regimes' in the 1930s was different from the understanding of 'totalitarianism' that developed during the Cold War; and why Rougemont contrasted 'totalitarian' regimes with the personalist federation. This second point will lead us to Rougemont's attack on the liberal nation-state.

During the Cold War, attacks on 'totalitarianism' became necessarily 'liberal-democratic'.<sup>1188</sup> In the 1930s, however, the concept of 'totalitarianism' was used with critical purposes by philosophers as diverse as the Marxist Karl Kautsky in Germany, José Ortega y

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<sup>1183</sup> The article was published anonymously: 'Conversation avec un S.A.' 38-42. We know that Rougemont wrote this article because he later published it under his name: Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*, 34-40. He also published, under his name: Rougemont, 'A propos d'une conversation avec un S.A.' 48.

<sup>1184</sup> Rougemont, 'A propos d'une conversation avec un S.A.' 48.

<sup>1185</sup> See for instance Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: the inner history of the Cold War* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>1186</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 505.

<sup>1187</sup> Rougemont's views on historical decay will be analysed with respect to *L'Amour et l'Occident* in Chapter 7. See 'Livre V: L'Amour et la Guerre', in Denis de Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident* (Présences, 1st edn. Paris, 1939), 239-74. See also Denis de Rougemont, 'Passion and the origin of Hitlerism', *The Review of Politics*, 3, 1 (Jan. 1941).

<sup>1188</sup> On 'totalitarianism', see the historiographical essay and the collection of articles in Enzo Traverso (ed.) *Le totalitarisme. Le XXe siècle en débat* (Paris, 2001).

Gasset in Spain, Jacques Maritain and the group of *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* in France (including Rougemont, as the editor, and Boris Souvarine). A review of Rougemont's *Journal d'Allemagne* by Boris Souvarine (probably written in 1939) convincingly illustrates 'la proche parenté' between the Nazi regime and the 'soi-disant système soviétique'.<sup>1189</sup> Yet, according to Rougemont, the kinship was not only between the Nazi and the Soviet regimes, but also with liberal thought. Thereafter, Rougemont argued: 'la première tâche des intellectuels qui ont compris le péril totalitaire (de droite ou de gauche) ce n'est pas "d'adhérer" à quelque anti-fascisme, mais de s'attaquer à la forme de pensée d'où vont nécessairement sortir le fascisme et le stalinisme. Et c'est la pensée libérale.'<sup>1190</sup> This identification of liberal thought with 'totalitarian' threats is unthinkable in Cold War terms.<sup>1191</sup>

The idea that 'totalitarian' states – whether Communist, Fascist, or National-Socialist – have more similarities than differences was a leitmotiv of Rougemont's writings from the early 1930s. In *Penser avec les mains* (1936), Rougemont condemned 'l'Etat Totalitaire, qu'ils pourront baptiser soviétique ou fasciste, peu importe – ces noms sont insensés pour nous [personnalistes]'.<sup>1192</sup> The reason for not making a distinction is explained in a footnote: 'Quand je dis que l'Etat totalitaire *menace* de provoquer le désastre humain le plus grandiose de l'histoire, c'est parce que, dans *l'ensemble* de ses ambitions concrètes, dans la frénésie unitaire qui préside à chacun de ses actes, je vois les symptômes cliniques d'une maladie de l'esprit et du cœur des citoyens, qui est mortelle.'<sup>1193</sup> Thus the term 'totalitaire' expressed, for Rougemont, the limitless ambitions of the Soviet and fascist states, in particular their aspirations to unify all aspects of existence.

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<sup>1189</sup> The original, with annotations by Rougemont, is in Rougemont's papers, BPUN, Neuchâtel. It was published as Boris Souvarine, 'La parenté du régime nazi et du système soviétique', *Commentaire*, 62 (Summer 1993 (c1939)), 261-90.

<sup>1190</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Trop d'irresponsables s'engagent! (Responsabilité des intellectuels)', *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 6th year, 42 (15 June 1938), 22.

<sup>1191</sup> Had it known this, the journal *Commentaire*, a stronghold of liberal thought in France, would probably not have praised Rougemont's understanding of totalitarianism. Charles Jacquier, 'Souvarine et Rougemont. Explications', *Commentaire*, 62 (Summer 1993), 259-60.

<sup>1192</sup> Denis de Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains* (1st edn. Paris, 1936), 192.

<sup>1193</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 192 n.1. The emphasis is his.



There was no doubt as to why it was indispensable to oppose ‘totalitarian’ regimes with a ‘*violence nécessaire*’ for Rougemont: ‘– Car notre force est personnelle, non collective. Elle réside dans les petits groupes, non dans l’Etat totalitaire. Elle a pour formule réelle – même là où l’on refuse encore ce nom – la FÉDÉRATION, non la masse ; et non la tyrannie d’un seul, et non le gigantisme national.’<sup>1194</sup> Federalist personalism vs. the ‘totalitarian’ state – a principle spelled out clearly in 1936 – would become the basis of Rougemont’s wartime and post-war commitment.<sup>1195</sup> It is important that he did not initially use the term in a Cold War context: Rougemont condemned ‘totalitarisme’ from 1937 onwards.<sup>1196</sup> From 1938, he frequently repeated the motto: ‘*Là où l’homme VEUT être total, l’Etat ne sera jamais totalitaire*’.<sup>1197</sup> Rougemont gave a moral interpretation of ‘totalitarianism’: it was the result of the people giving up their responsibility and freedom.

Historical (over)interpretation came into play when Rougemont presented Jacobinism as the first attempt to set up a ‘totalitarian’ regime.<sup>1198</sup> Incidentally, this makes Rougemont a champion of ‘origins’ studies of ‘prehistoric’ fascism. Rougemont explained the ‘origins’ of ‘totalitarian’ regimes in relation with the nation-state. The nation-state, initiated by the Jacobins in France and brought to a climax in Nazi Germany, was ‘totalitarian’ in essence. Its main characteristics were: centralization of power, uniformization, and exaltation of the nation; its main purpose: warfare.<sup>1199</sup> It is interesting to note that Rougemont’s interpretation of the ‘origins’ of ‘totalitarianism’ was diametrically opposed to Hannah Arendt’s *The origins of totalitarianism*. Arendt saw the *decline* of the nation-state as initiating the disenfranchisement of minorities and a forced ‘statelessness, the newest mass phenomenon in

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<sup>1194</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 136.

<sup>1195</sup> See in particular Bruno Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont. De la personne à l’Europe, Essai biographique* (Lausanne, 2000); Bruno Ackermann, ‘The spiritual foundations of the European thinking of Denis de Rougemont’, in Jurgen Wiersma (ed.) *Discernment and commitment* (Kampen, 1993); Deering, *Combats acharnés: Denis de Rougemont et les fondements de l’unité européenne*; Jacob, *Le retour de "L’Ordre Nouveau"*. See also Izard’s study: ‘Denis de Rougemont: du personnalisme au fédéralisme, 1930-1950’ in ‘Du personnalisme au fédéralisme européen. En hommage à Denis de Rougemont’, Paper presented at the Colloquium 21-23 Apr. 1989, Geneva, 1989.

<sup>1196</sup> e.g. ‘s’emparer de la liberté même des jeunes, voilà le totalitarisme’, in Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 27.

<sup>1197</sup> Rougemont, ‘La vraie défense contre l’esprit totalitaire’, 425. The emphasis and capitals are his.

<sup>1198</sup> Especially in Rougemont, ‘Les Jacobins en chemise brune’. Also in Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 86-92.

<sup>1199</sup> See in particular Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 17-18, 54-6, 73, 85-92.

history', potentially having genocidal implications.<sup>1200</sup> Rougemont's and Arendt's analyses in terms of the rise/decline of the nation-state are confusing. It has been argued that Arendt's thesis was undermined by the fact that 'totalitarian' regimes 'succeeded' in countries where there had not been an established nation-state before.<sup>1201</sup> The same also applies to Rougemont's model (and to Ackermann's presentation thereof). Nevertheless, one may suggest that the value of both Rougemont's and Arendt's analyses lies in their identification of personal/human with civic/political status.<sup>1202</sup>

Another interesting aspect in Rougemont's approach to 'totalitarianism', which Ackermann has also noted, was Rougemont's definition of humour as a weapon against 'totalitarian' frenzy.<sup>1203</sup> Lack of humour in 'totalitarian' politics was a feature Rougemont distinguished in 1938. Was it a specifically Swiss contribution to political science? Some of Rougemont's articles would suggest so.<sup>1204</sup> In his *Journal d'Allemagne*, he recalled that, as he stood in a crowd for more than three hours, waiting to hear Hitler: 'Personne ne s'impatiente, ni ne plaisante.'<sup>1205</sup> Rougemont's critique of National Socialism may appear ambiguous at times because he used irony to discredit his adversaries. Yet bearing in mind the whole text and the context, his position is unequivocal. This is exceptional among third-way protagonists.

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<sup>1200</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (2nd edn. Cleveland, 1958), 277. The quotation is from Chapter 9, entitled: 'The decline of the Nation-State and the end of the Rights of Man'.

<sup>1201</sup> For an overview of the historiography, see Aschheim, 'Nazism, Culture and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil', 117-22.

<sup>1202</sup> If one were to study Rougemont's doctrine after 1940, it would be interesting to develop the parallel between Rougemont and Arendt, a comparison authorised by Arendt's review of Rougemont's *The Devil's Share* (his chief work on 'totalitarianism', published in New York in 1942– English edn: Denis de Rougemont, *Talk of the Devil* (Translated by Kathleen Raine. London, 1945).). Hannah Arendt, 'Nightmare and Flight', *Partisan Review*, 2 (1945) reprinted in Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Essays in understanding 1930-1954* (New York, 1954), 133-5. For their opposite views on the nation-state, Rougemont and Arendt share an analysis in terms of social disintegration, and they are careful not to put the blame on the Germans. Comparison with Raymond Aron and Jacques Maritain should also be fruitful.

<sup>1203</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 481 n.109. With humour, Rougemont gave a recipe for a 'totalitarian' State: 'Prenez en effet une démocratie quelconque. Supprimez toute espèce d'humour aussi bien dans sa vie quotidienne – rouspétance du citoyen – que dans sa vie proprement politique – farce des partis – et vous obtiendrez au terme de l'opération, si elle est énergiquement poussée, l'Etat totalitaire dans sa splendeur native.' Denis de Rougemont, *La Part du Diable* (2nd edn. New York, 1944), 90.

<sup>1204</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'D'un humour romand', *Les nouvelles littéraires*, 593 (24 Feb. 1934), 4.

<sup>1205</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d'Allemagne*. This is the latter version of the text (published on 21 Nov. 1938). The first version, published in June 1938, was: 'Personne ne s'impatiente, ni ne parle.' Denis de Rougemont, 'Vues sur le National-Socialisme', *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, 26 (1 June 1938), 8.

For instance, analysing the catalogue of a German publisher around Christmas 1937, and finding the word or the idea of 'race' in a quarter of the titles offered, he concluded: 'Je vous laisse imaginer les rêves du lecteur allemand, heureux bénéficiaire de ces « cadeaux de Noël ».'<sup>1206</sup> The article is an attack on insidious propaganda: 'Il faut se rappeler que dans un état totalitaire, la question « à quoi pensent ?... » tend à se réduire à la question : « à quoi leur dit-on de penser ? » C'est à dire qu'on a remplacé la mode – maîtresse des goûts moyens en France – par la volonté de l'Etat (Hitler, Goebbels et Rosenberg).'<sup>1207</sup> The Nazi aspirations to take responsibility for all areas of existence, including dreams and jokes, was part of Rougemont's personalist critique of 'totalitarian' regimes.

Irony went in hand with open debate for Rougemont. In 1939, he pleaded for an open discussion of the *facts* of the Soviet and Nazi regimes: 'L'un massacre des hommes parce qu'ils ont une ascendance juive, l'autre parce qu'ils ont une ascendance koulak. Tous les deux persécutent les chrétiens. Tous les deux privent le citoyen de ses libertés, etc.'<sup>1208</sup> He added : 'Refuser de discuter Hitler, c'est le « tabouer », le considérer comme l'adversaire *sacré*. Le sacré, c'est ce qu'on ne discute pas. Mais le sacré est toujours ambigu : l'horreur toujours liée à l'attrance. En discutant Hitler, je le *profane*. C'est beaucoup plus dangereux pour son mythe que les vociférations sacrées de quelques « antifascistes ».'<sup>1209</sup> We shall come back to Rougemont's opposition to the sacred in Hitlerism, as indeed in any political regime.

That Rougemont's irony and his belief in 'le pouvoir des mots' are susceptible to misreading is evident from Patrick Leuzinger's recent thesis.<sup>1210</sup> To counter what he saw as Ackermann's 'lecture non seulement *acritique*, mais hagiographique', Leuzinger has insisted on Rougemont's anti-liberalism in the 1930s.<sup>1211</sup> In his attempt to balance Ackermann's

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<sup>1206</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Lectures dirigées dans le IIIe Reich', *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, 16 (15 Dec. 1937), 16.

<sup>1207</sup> Rougemont, 'Lectures dirigées dans le IIIe Reich', 16.

<sup>1208</sup> Denis de Rougemont, "'Faire le jeu d'Hitler'", *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, 37 (1 Jan. 1939), 15.

<sup>1209</sup> Rougemont, "'Faire le jeu d'Hitler'", 15 n.1.

<sup>1210</sup> The question of demystification will be further considered in Chapter 7, with regards to the *Collège de Sociologie*.

<sup>1211</sup> Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral', 15.

interpretation of personalism as ‘anti-totalitarian’,<sup>1212</sup> Leuzinger became one-sided and excessive. He saw personalism as paving the way for authoritarian ideology. His dissertation needs to be discussed here, not so much to correct its numerous mistakes, but to illustrate the inadequacy of current political criteria to evaluate the personalism of the 1930s.

Leuzinger has applied to the 1930s a contemporary definition of ‘le libéralisme’, and then reified ‘anti-liberal’ discourse in the 1930s. In Leuzinger’s definition, ‘le libéralisme’ is ‘un régime qui se réclame de la Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen (celle de 1789), du parlementarisme bourgeois (inauguré par la constitution américaine de 1787) et du suffrage universel (acquis dans la *deuxième moitié du XXe siècle*... si l’on considère les femmes comme partie intégrante de l’humanité).’<sup>1213</sup> The awkward conjunction ‘si’ in the last sentence notwithstanding, we can remark that this definition of liberalism does not apply to France in the first half of the twentieth century, when Rougemont was criticising the French regime. The bulk of Leuzinger’s dissertation is a selective compilation of Rougemont’s works, evaluated with the above definition of ‘le libéralisme’.<sup>1214</sup>

Leuzinger’s definition of liberalism as a ‘parlementarisme bourgeois’ brings to mind a question, raised by Rougemont in an article translated into English in 1938: ‘is the “liberalism” of our democracies anything but the spontaneous conformity of our thought to the limitations of bourgeois society?’<sup>1215</sup> Hindsight tells us how inopportune it was to reject the Third Republic in the late 1930s. But to Leuzinger, personalists challenged the parliamentary system of the Third Republic, which was the incarnation of democratic and

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<sup>1212</sup> ‘Le texte d’Ackermann fait avant tout de la doctrine personaliste une arme du combat contre les totalitarismes fasciste et communiste.’, in Leuzinger, ‘Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l’engagement antilibéral’, 14.

<sup>1213</sup> Leuzinger, ‘Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l’engagement antilibéral’, 4. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>1214</sup> From pages 79 to 200 (out of 272), there is not a single mention of another source than Rougemont’s works. In the introduction, Leuzinger admits: ‘bien entendu, non seulement ce mémoire ne peut insérer l’œuvre de Rougemont dans la constellation des idéologies à la fois anticapitalistes et antiparlementaires que la France ou l’Europe ont connues à l’époque, bien que cet éclairage eût été très instructif, mais il ne peut même pas proposer un bilan du seul personalisme.’ Leuzinger, ‘Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l’engagement antilibéral’, 6.

<sup>1215</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Bourgeois totalitarianism’, *The student world*, XXXI, 2 (Second quarter 1938), 147.

liberal values; hence personalists were proto-fascists whatever their discourses may have been. This is a caricature of Sternhell's argument.<sup>1216</sup>

Ironically, when Leuzinger quotes Rougemont without any comparison or contrast in the 1930s, he ends up making Rougemont a truly exceptional thinker.<sup>1217</sup> Finally, his dissertation may only stand as a critique of Ackermann in the sense that, despite a close reading of Ackermann's 1200-page work, Leuzinger completely misread Rougemont's personalism. The last section of this chapter will attempt to contextualize and open up the documents more convincingly. Two other readings of Rougemont, by François Saint-Ouen and Jean Jacob, also show the need for a historical perspective on Rougemont's political views.

## **Saint-Ouen vs. Jacob**

François Saint-Ouen and Jean Jacob trace back the political trajectory of Rougemont across the twentieth century, in order to shed light on the significance of his political views today.<sup>1218</sup> Saint-Ouen has summarized in clear and concise reviews the various works of Denis de Rougemont.<sup>1219</sup> His works have the merit of presenting succinctly Rougemont's political journey in its entirety. He fully endorses Ackermann's thesis for the pre-1945 period, namely the argument that Rougemont was anti-fascist and anti-communist from the beginning.<sup>1220</sup>

While Saint-Ouen is a supporter of European federalism, Jean Jacob is totally against the idea. His doctoral thesis, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"* (2000), looks for the origins of

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<sup>1216</sup> Leuzinger refers to Sternhell, 'La troisième voie fasciste ou la recherche d'une culture politique alternative', 201.

<sup>1217</sup> For instance, he attributes to Rougemont the analysis of National Socialism as a political religion. Leuzinger, 'Denis de Rougemont, la crise de la civilisation et l'engagement antilibéral', 193-203. See below.

<sup>1218</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*; Saint-Ouen, *Denis de Rougemont*; Saint-Ouen, 'Les personalistes: Denis de Rougemont et Alexandre Marc').

<sup>1219</sup> Saint-Ouen, *Denis de Rougemont*.

<sup>1220</sup> See in particular Saint-Ouen, 'Les personalistes: Denis de Rougemont et Alexandre Marc', 243-4.

the ecological movement in the 1930s.<sup>1221</sup> Jacob pays particular attention to Denis de Rougemont because he founded ECOROPA, one of the main European ecologist associations, in the late 1970s. Jacob draws interesting parallels between the 1930s and 1970s. However, his study of personalism is not fully satisfactory on all historical counts. For example, Jacob presents Jean-Marie Pelt and Roger Garaudy as followers of Denis de Rougemont.<sup>1222</sup> We can admit the link between Pelt and the Rougemont of the 1970s (who had changed since the 1930s): Pelt is a militant of ECOROPA.<sup>1223</sup> The link between Garaudy and Rougemont, by contrast, was but a brief event in Garaudy's career.<sup>1224</sup> One wonders why, in the introduction, Jacob mentions Garaudy in relation to Rougemont. Jacob was writing in the late 1990s, at a time when Garaudy was at the heart of a controversy about Holocaust revisionist views.<sup>1</sup> He is misleading when he suggests that Garaudy's trajectory could be a 'precedent' for personalism.<sup>1226</sup> It is difficult to see how the zigzaggery of Garaudy – from Protestantism to Communism, through Stalinism back to Catholicism, then to Islam, and lastly as a Holocaust revisionist – could set a precedent. Jacob eventually contradicts himself (in the annex).<sup>1227</sup>

Jacob's thesis is a reassessment of personalism in terms of the right-left divide in politics. He insists on the continuity of Rougemont's thought from the 1930s onwards (absolutely unlike Garaudy's trajectory).<sup>1228</sup> He dismisses Rougemont's efforts to legislate as

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<sup>1221</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*.

<sup>1222</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 9.

<sup>1223</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 215-25.

<sup>1224</sup> The Garaudy of the late 1970s, leftist Catholic and director of the Institut International pour le Dialogue des Cultures in Geneva from 1974, called on Rougemont in his *Il est encore temps de vivre* (1980). Jacob elaborates on the question over a dozen pages: Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 232-46.

<sup>1225</sup> Garaudy's *Les mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne*, published in France in 1995, unleashed the most vigorous debate about Holocaust revisionist views. His trial and conviction (in Paris in 1998, under the Grayssot law which makes it a crime to question the crimes against humanity as they were defined during the Nuremberg Trials) ignited further conflagration across the Islamic Middle East and beyond.

<sup>1226</sup> Full quotation: 'Que prélude exactement le mariage de l'écologie et du personnalisme-fédéraliste ? Un précédent témoigne de cette ambivalence. Désireux initialement de concilier communisme et christianisme, Roger Garaudy a marié, au milieu des années 70, écologie et personnalisme-fédéraliste...avant de sombrer à l'extrême droite. Le personnalisme dans sa variante fédéraliste et accommodé d'écologie ouvre ainsi des portes inattendues. [...] Lorsque le socle de la modernité est attaqué en ses fondements, les dérives sont rapides.' Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 229.

<sup>1227</sup> In the annex, Jacob feels uneasy with his statement, and admits the *évidence*: 'il importe de souligner – mais cela relève de l'évidence – que la dérive de Roger Garaudy vers l'extrême droite est évidemment tout à fait singulière dans ce milieu alternatif.' Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 246.

<sup>1228</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 109-71.

to how his doctrine should be read; and adopts a Sternhellian view on the ‘non-conformistes des années trente’. Jacob gives this explanation:

Or il n'est pas besoin d'être grand clerc pour se rendre compte que Denis de Rougemont n'a jamais admis la radicalité du processus révolutionnaire français. [...] Ce qui est alors contesté, c'est la capacité de l'homme d'agir en tant que sujet libre, sans en référer à une quelconque tradition ou religion. Pourtant les thèses de Denis de Rougemont jouissent, en dépit de ce fond conservateur, d'une certaine popularité au sein des gauches alternatives. C'est que Denis de Rougemont a su habilement tirer profit de thèmes d'actualité pour réactualiser ses thèses conservatrices et leur conférer une couche gauchisante.<sup>1229</sup>

Acceptance of the radicality of the French Revolution defines our capacity to act as free subjects, according to Jacob. This is also the definition of the ‘left’ in France. Therefore, Rougemont, who was against Jacobinism, was against individual freedom, and against the left, at least until May 1968, when the nascent ecological movement provided ‘une nouvelle respectabilité à une thématique sinon sulfureuse du moins conservatrice.’<sup>1230</sup> It is difficult to read this without thinking that Jacob has political purposes.

If Jacob's analysis of the past is unconvincing, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"* remains interesting on how the ‘Nouvelle Droite’ has recuperated ‘nonconformist’ themes in recent years.<sup>1231</sup> Jacob is also interesting on another count: he raises the question of the secular vs. religious approach to politics in France. The interpretative postulate that frames his book is that ‘religion’ and ‘tradition’ are conservative and right-wing. Jacob dismisses the personalist attempt to reconcile religion and revolution. This is not new: already in 1933, Pierre-Olivier Lapie – a former member of the ON – warned: ‘Révolutionnaires qui n'osez pas vous dire catholiques et vous aussi, catholiques qui vous dites révolutionnaires prenez garde. Par la révolution vous délaissez le Pape, par votre religion, vous appelez le Messie. Prenez garde, camarades, que votre Messie soit Hitler, et votre pape, à vous, un curé de plein

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<sup>1229</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 8.

<sup>1230</sup> Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 11.

<sup>1231</sup> In Jacob's own words: ‘Il est d'usage de regrouper sous le terme générique de « Nouvelle Droite » une école de pensée principalement animée par Alain de Benoist (né en 1947) et qui se manifeste sur un terrain purement culturel en organisant des colloques dans le cadre du Groupe de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne (le GRECE) et en publiant les revues *Nouvelle Ecole*, *Eléments pour la civilisation européenne* et *Krisis*.’ Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 247. As he put it in the introduction: ‘certains thèmes non-conformistes ne seront pas sans éveiller l'intérêt d'une frange radicale de l'extrême droite qui tentera de s'annexer l'écologie politique et une certaine forme de personnalisme en accentuant les aspects conservateurs (enracinement, éloge de l'identité...).’, Jacob, *Le retour de "L'Ordre Nouveau"*, 9.

vent.<sup>1232</sup> What seems to disturb Jacob the most is Rougemont's rejection of Jacobinism and *a fortiori* fascism as politico-religious phenomena.

## Rougemont vs. 'political religions'

The key to Rougemont's unequivocal rejection of Marxism and fascism *sensu lato*, is that he saw them as surrogate religions, attempting to replace the 'wholly Other' (*der ganz Andere* in Barthian terms) with a state pseudo-mysticism. His writings on 'totalitarian' regimes (including fascisms) are based on an underlying opposition to political religion. Philippe Burrin has shown that analysis in terms of political religion was common in the interwar period.<sup>1233</sup> From Franz Werfel's description of fascisms as 'Ersatzreligionen' in 1932, to Raymon Aron's study of 'les religions séculières' in 1942, through *Religions politiques* by Erich Voegelin (1938), the comparison of 'totalitarian' regimes with secular or political religions was widespread.<sup>1234</sup>

Burrin has convincingly argued that, although 'political religion' did not have the same posterity as the alternative concept of 'totalitarianism', it remains an interesting analytical tool today.<sup>1235</sup> Rather than repeating the analysis of Rougemont's 'anti-totalitarian' texts, which Bruno Ackermann and Rémi Fabre have given us already,<sup>1236</sup> I would like to suggest that the concept of 'political religion' is at least as relevant to characterise Rougemont's perspective on the various fascisms and communism.

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<sup>1232</sup> N.D.L.R. 'Polémique cordiale – L'Ordre Nouveau', *Mouvements*, 9 (June 1933), 1.

<sup>1233</sup> Philippe Burrin, 'Political religion: the relevance of a concept', *History and Memory*, IX, 1-2 (Fall 1997).

<sup>1234</sup> Traverso (ed.) *Le totalitarisme. Le XXe siècle en débat*, 67-70.

<sup>1235</sup> See Hans Maier (ed.) *"Totalitarismus" und "Politische Religionen": Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs* (Paderborn, 1996).

<sup>1236</sup> See above for Ackermann's analysis; Fabre studies Rougemont's analysis of 'totalitarismes' in *Politique de la personne* (1934) and presents Rougemont as a forerunner of anti-communism and anti-nazism. His analysis is similar to Ackermann's, and I do not repeat it here because it is older and less precise. Rémi Fabre, 'Les étudiants protestants face aux totalitarismes dans les années trente', *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France*, LXXIII, 191 (July-Dec. 1987), 270-84.



Interestingly, the term ‘political religion’ seems to have been used for the first time during the French Revolution, to describe the indoctrination of the French armies (Christoph Martin Wieland) or the ‘blind enthusiasm’ for the constitution that revolutionary education was supposed to compel in children’s minds (Condorcet).<sup>1237</sup> In the early twentieth century, the concept was used by Russian thinkers, including some socialists, who argued that socialism was becoming a religious faith.<sup>1238</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev famously developed this interpretation of ‘Socialism as religion’ in 1906.<sup>1239</sup> This view was developed by various Russian religious thinkers in the following years.<sup>1240</sup> In the 1930s, the comparison between Christianity (occasionally Islam) and communism or fascism entered Austrian, German and French scholarship. Analysis in terms of ‘political religion’ denounced a sacralization of the political community as a higher reality, whether a people, a class, a race, or the state.<sup>1241</sup> The term ‘political religion’ raises issues as to the definition of religion itself. Without entering this debate, Rougemont identified ways in which Communism and National Socialism acted as if they sought to replace (the remnants of) Christianity.

Through his contacts with ecumenical milieux and his commitments in the Protestant world, Rougemont was well informed about the persecutions of Christian Churches in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany.<sup>1242</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev and Karl Barth were instrumental in providing Rougemont with a theological understanding of the Communist and Nazi regimes as fundamentally anti-Christian. Both regimes were all the more perfidious as they were borrowing aspects of Russian Orthodox and Lutheran traditions respectively. It has been mentioned already that Berdiaev’s religious interpretation of communism was taken on board

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<sup>1237</sup> Burrin, ‘Political religion: the relevance of a concept’, 322.

<sup>1238</sup> Philip Boobbyer, *S.L. Frank. The life and work of a Russian philosopher, 1877-1950* (Athens, Ohio, 1995), 63-4.

<sup>1239</sup> See Nicolas Berdiaev, ‘Socialism as religion’, in M. Bohachevsky-Chomiak and B.G. Rosenthal (eds), *A revolution of the spirit: crisis of value in Russia, 1890-1918* (Newtonville, Mass., 1982).

<sup>1240</sup> In his 1909 essay ‘The Ethic of Nihilism’, Frank described the Russian intelligentsia as possessed by ‘the nihilistic religion of earthly contentment’, and made this moral feature responsible for the emergence of ‘religious socialism’, see Boobbyer, *S.L. Frank. The life and work of a Russian philosopher, 1877-1950*, 63-67.

<sup>1241</sup> Burrin, ‘Political religion: the relevance of a concept’, 323-4.

<sup>1242</sup> On these connections, see Chapter 7.

by the personalists at *Esprit*, including Rougemont.<sup>1243</sup> In his *Le nouveau Moyen Age* (1924), Berdiaev expressed the view that, in communism, social concerns constituted the ‘Truth’.<sup>1</sup> Barth, for his part, asserted that communist and fascist ideologies corresponded to a form of religious longing, just as deceptive as that of other religions. Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism raised ‘la même question à laquelle les religions donnent leurs réponses incertaines, démoniaques, fausses, faisant ainsi le malheur des hommes.’<sup>1245</sup> In Bathian terms, a ‘religious’ quest is necessarily misleading and deceptive: God decides whether, when and how He graciously makes himself known.

From 1931, the theology of Karl Barth was decisive in making Protestant youth movements staunch opponents of communism, and, from 1933, resisters against Nazism.<sup>1</sup> The *Kirchenkampf* in Germany, from 1933 onwards, made Barthian theology appear as a weapon with which to resist Nazism.<sup>1247</sup> Barth left Germany in 1935, and returned to Switzerland. Between 1934 and 1945, whenever the French and French Swiss press mentioned Barth, it was to give his analysis of European politics.<sup>1248</sup> It should be remembered that Rougemont was one of the most active Barthians at the Fédération française des associations chrétiennes d’étudiants (FFACE).<sup>1249</sup>

In the *Journal d’Allemagne* (November 1938), Rougemont held that Nazism was a religious phenomenon,<sup>1250</sup> which required a spiritual answer: ‘ceci définit Hitler : *seul un*

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<sup>1243</sup> On the confluence between Berdiaev’s theories about communism and the public position espoused by *Esprit* from 1932 to 1939, see Catherine Baird, ‘Religious communism? Nicolai Berdyaev’s contribution to *Esprit*’s interpretation of communism’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 30 (April 1995).

<sup>1244</sup> See Chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>1245</sup> Karl Barth, ‘Question au christianisme’, *Le Semeur* (mars 1932), 264-5, quoted in Fabre, ‘Les étudiants protestants face aux totalitarismes dans les années trente’, 283.

<sup>1246</sup> Fabre, ‘Les étudiants protestants face aux totalitarismes dans les années trente’.

<sup>1247</sup> Bernard Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945* (Lausanne, 1985), 27.

<sup>1248</sup> Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945*, 27.

<sup>1249</sup> Arnaud Baubérot, ‘La revue *Hic et Nunc*: Les jeunes-turcs du protestantisme et l’esprit des années trente’, *Bulletin de la société de l’histoire du protestantisme français*, 149 (July-Aug.-Sept.); Fabre, ‘Les étudiants protestants face aux totalitarismes dans les années trente’.

<sup>1250</sup> See esp. the famous passage on Nazi cult: Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 49.

*prophète peut lui répondre.*<sup>1251</sup> Faith was to be the only efficient response to ‘le péril totalitaire’: ‘Retrouver une foi qui ne soit pas cette volonté anxieuse de croire à la Nation...’<sup>1252</sup> And this faith was Christianity in its original force, stripped of the religiousness and sentimentality that Rougemont, like Barth, found in most established Churches.<sup>1</sup> Rougemont analysed the way in which Nazism drew on Protestant liturgical culture to elevate politics to worship, thereby establishing political meetings as a liturgy and political aims as an absolute.<sup>1254</sup>

Since the 1930s, political historians have studied the religious dimension of Nazism, and there would be no point dwelling upon it here.<sup>1255</sup> Instead, I would like to focus on unpublished notes by Rougemont, which shed a new light on his reasons for holding personalism as the opposite of fascism. The first note was intended for an ‘*Introduction générale ou conclusion de L’homme franc (Polit.[ique de la] Personne, tome II)*’, which was never published. It bears the date ‘21 June 1936’, which means it was written at the end of Rougemont’s academic year as a lector in Nazi Germany. This note makes sense only in its entirety, hence the unusually long quotation:

‘*Opposition personalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*

Pour le fasciste (ou communisme) la Vérité est *sociale*. (race, communauté nationale, classe). Pour le chrétien elle est *personne*. (Pour le libéral rationaliste elle était générale et individuelle. Elle ne se fondait

1. ni sur la *réalité* humaine, qui est sociale et non générale
2. ni sur la *réalité* divine, qui est personnelle, et non individuelle)

Le chrétien (personnaliste) ne vit la Vérité concrète que lorsqu’il est en rapport unique et *actif* avec la source de toute activité et Vérité, Dieu en Christ. Vérité qui est d’avant et d’après tout. (avant et après toute société humaine ; éternelle).

Le fasciste dit : Dieu (la Vérité) c’est le social. (Etat, Nation, Volksgemeinschaft, Classe) Il ne peut entrer en contact avec son Dieu, sa Vérité, que

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<sup>1251</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 53.

<sup>1252</sup> Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 74-75.

<sup>1253</sup> One examples, among many: ‘Chrétiens, retournez aux catacombes ! Votre « religion » est vaincue, vos cérémonies modestes, vos petites assemblées, vos chants traînants, tout cela sera balayé. Il ne vous restera que la foi. Mais la vraie lutte commence là.’ Rougemont, *Journal d’Allemagne*, 49.

<sup>1254</sup> See Ackermann’s analysis of *Journal d’Allemagne*.

<sup>1255</sup> See Erich Voegelin’s analysis in the 1930s, Raymond Aron’s in the 1940s, and Herman Lübbe and Hans Maier in the 1990s. Reviewed in Burrin, ‘Political religion: the relevance of a concept’.

lorsqu'il s'ordonne à la communauté terrestre. La Vérité lui vient de l'unanimité immanente.

La vérité du chrétien est *avant* toute communauté. Voire le plus souvent : contre. Elle fonde la seule unanimité réelle et concrète, synthétique, qui est l'*Eglise indivisible* (Or l'Eglise visible n'est que l'espoir dans le péché.)

Transcendance et immanence : tout le débat est là. Religion ou foi. Force ou vérité ? Non. (Mythe de droit) Mais force humaine (non-vraie) ou force de Dieu (incroyable et vraie).<sup>1256</sup>

The title in itself is interesting: Rougemont seems to equate personalism with Christianity, and fascism with communism. Rougemont sees (Christian) personalism as a means to reconcile both human and divine realities. The key to the debate is the Kierkegaardian alternative, given in conclusion: 'Transcendance et immanence : tout le débat est là. Religion ou foi.'<sup>1257</sup> This makes no sense outside Kierkegaard's opposition between religion (idolatry) and faith (subjective self-commitment maintained in the face of intellectual uncertainty or paradox).

The phrase 'rapport unique et *actif* avec la source de toute activité et Vérité' (Rougemont's emphasis) suggests a dialogue between the believer and Christ. In 1934, Rougemont had already expressed this principle of dialogical philosophy, in theological and political terms.<sup>1258</sup> He had particularly warned against the interruption of dialogue by fusion of the different persons into a single entity: 'On voudrait nous faire croire aujourd'hui que le conflit fécond, la communion du *tu* et du *je* se résout pratiquement dans un *nous* [...]. Cette opération magistrale porte un nom en politique. C'est le fascisme'<sup>1259</sup> – and in 1936, Rougemont added – 'ou le national-socialisme.'<sup>1260</sup> Personalism by contrast, held that 'le rapport véritable entre les hommes, c'est la communauté des personnes responsables. [...] Elle a son centre en *chacune* des personnes qui la composent [...]. Elle est le rayonnement

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<sup>1256</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: 'Introduction générale ou conclusion de L'homme franc (Polit. Personne, tome II), *Opposition personnalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*', dated: 21 June 1936, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: 'I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934'.

<sup>1257</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: 'Introduction générale ou conclusion de L'homme franc (Polit. Personne, tome II), *Opposition personnalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*', dated: 21 June 1936, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: 'I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934'.

<sup>1258</sup> The theological dimensions of Rougemont's dialogical personalism will be further considered in Chapter 7.

<sup>1259</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Grammaire de la personne', *Hic et Nunc*, 5 (Jan. 1934), 19.

<sup>1260</sup> Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains*, 238.

dans la durée de l'acte instantané qui unit un *je* et un *tu* par un lien de responsabilité.<sup>1261</sup> This statement requires further explanation.

Rougemont was cautious not to place any community before the individual. As he put it in the manuscript quoted above: 'La vérité du chrétien est *avant* toute communauté. Voire le plus souvent : contre.'<sup>1262</sup> A Calvinist understanding of the Church motivates the parenthesis: '(Or l'Eglise visible n'est que l'espoir dans le péché.)'<sup>1263</sup> Rougemont condemned the defections of Christians and of Churches to the 'désordre établi' – the Third Republic, but also bourgeois, patriotic, and religious matters (as opposed to matters of faith).<sup>1264</sup>

Rougemont was against all 'Christian' policies; 'toutes ces formules d'« ordre chrétien » ont été plus ou moins réalisées, et constituent dans leur ensemble, du moyen âge à l'Amérique moderne, la grande Imposture dont nous avons à dénoncer l'origine permanente et les manifestations modernes.'<sup>1265</sup> The origins of this imposture – the claim to found a 'Christian' social order – was that 'la « chrétienté » est sécularisée'.<sup>1266</sup> Rougemont was against the idea (and institution) of an established religion, and he rejected both religion and secularisation as mundane ambitions. Most of the time, the mundane ambitions of the state were less harmful than the mundane ambitions of the Church, so long as they were not taken on a spiritual plane. But what the 'totalitarians' did was to turn society (whether the

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<sup>1261</sup> Rougemont, 'Grammaire de la personne', 20.

<sup>1262</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: '*Introduction générale ou conclusion de L'homme franc (Polit. Personne, tome II), Opposition personnalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*', dated: 21 June 1936, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: 'I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934'.

<sup>1263</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: '*Introduction générale ou conclusion de L'homme franc (Polit. Personne, tome II), Opposition personnalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*', dated: 21 June 1936, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: 'I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934'.

<sup>1264</sup> See Denis de Rougemont, 'Comment rompre?' *Esprit*, 6 (March 1933), 909-16. 'Une église « établie » établissant à son tour un ordre injuste du monde et s'appuyant sur lui, en réalité n'est plus l'Eglise et n'a plus le droit de parler ; elle n'est plus qu'une précieuse auxiliaire de la Préfecture de Police. Qu'on n'attende donc pas de nous un appel aux Eglises en tant que corps constitués et officiels [Footnote :] L'Eglise « corps du Christ », en théologie ; et en réalité : corps officiellement constitué de la Troisième République...' Also in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 101-2.

<sup>1265</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 103-4.

<sup>1266</sup> Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 102.

‘Proletariat’, the ‘Race’, or the ‘State’) into an immanent ‘God’. Thus, ‘la vraie opposition est immanence – transcendance’.<sup>1267</sup> To quote another important unpublished note:

Si l’on reste dans l’immanent ou l’homogène, il semble bien que les totalitaires aient raison : la personne ne peut que devenir à partir de l’ensemble, à partir du sommet de la Société. (Le Dieu de Durkheim). Car une partie est moins qu’un tout. C’est ce qu’avait vu Dandieu : il posait donc une transcendance (l’Acte) qui rétablissait *formellement* la personne comme élément premier par son rapport à la société, laquelle n’était plus le tout dont je suis une partie, mais l’émanation de toutes les personnes qui la bâtissent (donc un *résultat*). (Renversement).<sup>1268</sup>

Rougemont and Dandieu opposed a ‘utilitarian’ understanding of the human person because it could potentially justify oppression of individuals and minorities. At a quantitative level (purely immanent), the human being was dependent on society (a part being less than the whole). Durkheim established that society was not simply equivalent to the sum of its individual members; using a chemical metaphor, he viewed it as an organic compound endowed with qualities that surpassed the qualities of its constituting elements. That Durkheimian principle of solidarity (which Rougemont called ‘le Dieu de Durkheim’) maintained that society is the source of everything that makes us human. In this logic, the artificial person of society (whether body politic, class, race, state, nation or corporation) has every right to prevail over all the concrete persons that are part of it. By contrast, the notion of ‘Acte’ allowed Dandieu to establish the primacy of the person over society, without referring to moral or theological reasons. By establishing that society was nothing but an end-result of free acts, personalists hoped to cancel the case for state intervention on behalf of the ‘common good’.

Rougemont called on Dandieu’s ‘anti-utilitarian’ and anti-religious model to resist the state. At the same time, he also drew on explicitly theological motives: ‘Force ou vérité ? Non. (Mythe de droit) Mais force humaine (non-vraie) ou force de Dieu (incroyable et vraie).’<sup>1269</sup> The alternative ‘Force ou vérité’ was the fascist vs. anti-fascist option. Rougemont

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<sup>1267</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: ‘*Mise au point sur le fascisme*’, dated: 21 June 1936, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: ‘I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934’.

<sup>1268</sup> Manuscript note by Denis de Rougemont: ‘*Personnalisme et Christianisme*’, non-dated (c.1936?), Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: ‘I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934’.

<sup>1269</sup> ‘*Introduction générale ou conclusion de L’homme franc (Polit. Personne, tome II), Opposition personnalisme (christianisme) fascisme (communisme)*’, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont papers, File: ‘I. 3, Politique de la personne, 1934’.

meant to *transcend* these oppositions by the ‘force de Dieu’. One may disagree on many counts. In particular, one may have strong reservations as to the suitability of drawing theology into political discourse. What is certain however is that Rougemont was fighting fascism with what he considered the strongest weapon. Chapter 7 will now show how Rougemont used this weapon on the eve of the Second World War, and how it proved to be a double-edged sword.

## Chapter 7. The person, love, and the Western world

*L'Amour et l'Occident* (1939), a minor classic translated into twelve languages, is well-known as an essay on the myth of courtly or romantic love, from its cultivation in twelfth-century Provence, down to its personal, artistic and political manifestations in the twentieth century.<sup>1270</sup> However, I argue in this chapter that this essay is a historical work only in the sense that it illustrates the content of debate in the Paris of the late 1930s. Written in the Paris of the late 1930s, *L'Amour et l'Occident* was a personalist defence of the freedom to love and to 'be oneself' against collectivist oppression, in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia especially, and against 'conformity' in 1930s France.

The literature on *L'Amour et l'Occident* is vast, from historical reviews to studies of literary criticism.<sup>1271</sup> But it has never been recognised that *L'Amour et l'Occident* is the acme of Rougemont's personalism. Bruno Ackermann has limited his account to a concise summary of *L'Amour et l'Occident*.<sup>1272</sup> He did indicate that '*L'Amour et l'Occident* s'inscrit dans le prolongement de la philosophie personaliste'.<sup>1273</sup> It is the aim of this chapter to explain how.

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<sup>1270</sup> *L'Amour et l'Occident* (Paris, 1939) was translated by Montgomery Belgion in 1940, as *Passion and society* (London) or *Love in the Western World* (New York). I use the French first edition in this chapter. The English translation is not always accurate and important passages were cut out (esp. in the last chapter 'de la fidélité', translated as 'keeping faith').

<sup>1271</sup> It would be impossible to list it all here. The main historical works will be considered in the course of this chapter.

<sup>1272</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle, 1*, 575-81.

<sup>1273</sup> When I first met Bruno Ackermann, he advised me to explore the issues raised by *L'Amour et l'Occident* or else to look at Rougemont's theology, two aspects which he had left aside. Looking at other dimensions of Rougemont's thought in the 1930s, I had come to face a theological question each time. Ackermann was right to think that the theological dimensions of *L'Amour et l'Occident* are the least known aspects of Rougemont's personalism, and I wish to express my gratitude once again.



For reasons of length, as well as chronological limits, it focuses on the first edition of *L'Amour et l'Occident*.<sup>1274</sup>

This chapter argues that *L'Amour et l'Occident* encompasses the various dimensions of personalism – whether political, philosophical, anthropological, historical or theological – and brings them to a climax. The first section argues that Rougemont's doctrine of *L'Amour* is the acme of his personalism proper. The critiques of personalists and other third-way protagonists in the Paris of the late 1930s underline the specificity of Rougemont's approach. The second section considers the paradoxes of *L'Occident* and the Eurocentrism inherent in Rougemont's approach. The personalism of *L'Amour* is intertwined with the Eurocentrism of *L'Occident*. For convenience's sake, the one is considered before the other.

## **1. The Personalism of L'Amour**

*L'Amour et l'Occident* constitutes the peak of Rougemont's personalism, both chronologically and philosophically. In this first section, I examine Rougemont's personalist approach to love.

### **Text and context**

The text of *L'Amour et l'Occident* is as instructive as the context in which it was published. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that the key chapters of *L'Amour et l'Occident* were first published in *Esprit* in 1938. Moreover, it is significant that the journal *Esprit* found it relevant to publish a polemic on *L'Amour et l'Occident*, as the war started. The debate in

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<sup>1274</sup> A thorough analysis of should include the successive editions (1939, 1956, and 1972), as well as complementary analysis. See Denis de Rougemont, *Comme toi-même. Essais sur les Mythes de l'Amour* (Paris, 1961); Denis de Rougemont, *Les Mythes de l'amour* (2nd edn. Paris, 1972). Rougemont kept an impressive, yet non-exhaustive, list of the books and articles discussing *L'Amour et l'Occident* in his papers, now in the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel.

*Esprit*, in September 1939, shows how *L'Amour et l'Occident* was the high point of Rougemont's personalism.<sup>1275</sup>

### The debate on love in the late 1930s

*L'Amour et l'Occident* fit into a broader debate on love and politics. The question of 'Europe and love' has received much attention recently, with a joint historical study directed by Luisa Passerini. The claim that Europe was characterised by courtly or romantic love (together with war) dominated the self-representation of Europeans, from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth century.<sup>1276</sup> In the 1930s, the question of 'love and Europe' was a contested field between fascists and anti-fascists. Nazi propaganda notoriously claimed that the type of love on which European civilisation was built could not be experienced by Jews and coloured people. These racist claims and the increasing international tensions, following the accession of Hitler to power in 1933, were the background of heated debates on what it meant to be European. Was Europe characterised by a unique type of love? Anti-fascists responded to Nazi claims by developing their own theories about Europe and love.

Of course, the very question of 'Europe and love' is problematic from a historical point of view. Not only is it Eurocentric, but also, more significantly, who can tell people what kind of love should characterize them as Europeans? Rougemont did not hesitate to answer, and it is clear that, thereby, he claimed a certain moral authority. *L'Amour et l'Occident* was one of the most categorical anti-fascist love essays. Rougemont saw romantic love (in particular the idea that the one who loves is no longer responsible for his actions) as

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<sup>1275</sup> In this section I follow a line of argument indicated by Rougemont. In a brief note, which has remained unknown until now, Rougemont criticized one of the first theses on personalism (by the Swiss Pierre de Senarclens) for failing to take into consideration his essential texts on personalism, especially *L'Amour et l'Occident*: 'Senarclens n'a pas vu 1 sec[onde] [...] que *A&O* paru 2 chap[itres] d[an]s *Esprit* puis un n° échanges avec Davenson : pas par hasard. Ma doct[rine] pers[onnaliste] s'y exemple [sic.] mieux que d[an]s *Pol[itique de la] Pers[on]ne* ou *P[enser avec les] M[ains]*.' See manuscript note by Rougemont in Pierre de Senarclens, *Le Mouvement "Esprit", 1932-1941, Essai critique* (Thèse pour l'obtention du grade de docteur ès sciences politiques, Université de Genève. vol. 264. Lausanne, 1974). 21R E 139, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Fonds Rougemont.

See special issue 'Europe and love', *European Review of History*, 11, 2 (Summer 2004), 171-302.

<sup>1276</sup> Luisa Passerini, 'Europe of Love: Re-centering Intercultural Affairs', *European Review of History*, 11, 2 (Summer 2004), 172.

the root of the modern loss of responsibility, which led to resignation to ‘totalitarian’ oppression. Against fatality, Rougemont sought to affirm the freedom and responsibility of the person.

*L’Amour et l’Occident* was not only shaped by the European situation, but also by the debates in late 1930s Paris. Scholars of literature have been right to contrast Rougemont’s essay with the surrealist praise of *L’Amour fou* (to quote André Breton’s famous book of 1937),<sup>1277</sup> and with the debate on Eros at the *Collège de Sociologie*, influenced by surrealism and Freud.<sup>1278</sup> At the time that he wrote *L’Amour et l’Occident*, Rougemont was a regular attendant of discussions at the *Collège de Sociologie*, organised by Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois, Michel Leiris and Pierre Klossowski.<sup>1279</sup>

Like many other third-way discourses of the 1930s, debates at the *Collège de Sociologie* were concerned with ‘the theorization of relations between literary practice, the sacred, performativity, and politics’.<sup>1280</sup> To give an impression of this milieu, Alexander Irwin has drawn a suggestive parallel between Bataille (the Nietzschean philosopher known for his deeply provocative assertions) and Simone Weil (the philosopher and mystic, near convert to Catholicism and sometimes considered as a saint).<sup>1281</sup> Rougemont was to give a paper on love at the *Collège de Sociologie*, but because of the war, this did not happen.<sup>1282</sup> *L’Amour et l’Occident* shared with the *Collège de Sociologie* the ‘fertile, polemical synthesis of psychoanalysis and anthropology’.<sup>1283</sup> As Geoffrey Wall pointed out, Rougemont rejected ‘the surrealist project, such as it became in the hands of Breton and Bataille, Klossowski, and

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<sup>1277</sup> Cf. J. Malpartida, 'El cuerpo, el alma y sus metáforas (The body, the soul and their metaphors. The Marquis de Sade, Denis de Rougemont, George Bataille, Octavio Paz, and their essays on love and eroticism)', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 553-4 (July-Aug. 1996), 121-36.

<sup>1278</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Wall, 'Eros in Europe', *The Cambridge quarterly*, 26, 2 (1997), 199-203.

<sup>1279</sup> Denis Hollier (ed.) *Le Collège de Sociologie (1937-1939)* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>1280</sup> Alexander Irwin, *Saints of the impossible: Bataille, Weil, and the politics of the sacred* (Minneapolis and London, 2002), XXV.

<sup>1281</sup> Irwin, *Saints of the impossible: Bataille, Weil, and the politics of the sacred*.

<sup>1282</sup> Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 576.

<sup>1283</sup> Wall, 'Eros in Europe', 199-203.

Leiris, with their celebration of Eros as sublime negativity.<sup>1284</sup> The reason why Rougemont rejected the surrealist project, I maintain, was his personalism.

To my knowledge, only Thomas Keller has looked at *L'Amour et l'Occident* as an anti-fascist and personalist essay. In his latest book, Keller has offered a radical interpretation.<sup>1285</sup> *L'Amour et l'Occident* was an essay *à clef* (that is a conversation in which actual persons are introduced under fictitious names); and Keller identified the following protagonists: Rougemont (for ON), Paul-Ludwig Landsberg and Emmanuel Mounier (the main philosophers of *Esprit*), as well as Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski (two founders of the *Collège de Sociologie*).<sup>1286</sup> *L'Amour et l'Occident* was not just a personalist contribution to the struggle against National Socialism, but also, Keller claimed, a denunciation of the dangers of contemporary theories on personal sanctification (Landsberg) or self-divinisation (Bataille).<sup>1287</sup> This argument may perplex the reader who is unfamiliar with the 'spiritual' character of European 'third-way discourses' of the 1930s. For one thing, it is impossible to prove scientifically that *L'Amour et l'Occident* was an essay *à clef* because nowhere did Rougemont state that he meant to respond to Landsberg, Mounier, Corbin, and Bataille when he wrote his book. However, we shall see that Keller's argument is not as odd as it may at first seem.

### **The question of a mystical revival**

Mixing politics and spirituality was a commonplace for third-way movements in the 1930s. These movements had in common the opposition to fascism from non-communist and non-rationalist standpoints. Because they saw fascism as a surrogate religion, oozing a sort of mystical force, they were convinced that fascism could not be stopped by diplomatic and

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<sup>1284</sup> Wall, 'Eros in Europe', 202.

<sup>1285</sup> See the discussion of *L'Amour et l'Occident* in Chap. VII, Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 343-9. I thank Christian Roy for the translation.

<sup>1286</sup> See Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, esp. 343-9; Keller, 'Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier', esp. 131-44.

<sup>1287</sup> See Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 347-8.

military manoeuvres alone.<sup>1288</sup> Thus, as the menace of a war grew, they started to think about a possible revival of political myths or mysticism which could give a spiritual energy to anti-fascism. From 1937, a select group at the *Collège de Sociologie* worked on the question of self-divinisation, and the theme of personal sanctification was developed in *Esprit*.

Rougemont was a participant to both the *Collège de Sociologie* and *Esprit*. Writing in *Esprit* in May 1937, Rougemont drew parallels between the research of the *Collège de Sociologie* and the doctrine of personalism. Both were anti-etatist, and thus radically anti-fascist: ‘« Acéphale » est le signe de l’anti-étatisme radical, c’est-à-dire le seul anti-fascisme digne de ce nom. [...] Cette société sans tête unique, c’est à peu près ce qu’en termes moins romantiques nous appelons fédération.’<sup>1289</sup> In spite of the political convergence, Rougemont rejected the metaphysics of *Acéphale*. He opposed Bataille’s atheism, and his saying that ‘« Dieu », la tête, l’unité, c’est l’état totalitaire, le fascisme ou le stalinisme.’<sup>1290</sup> Rougemont also expressed strong reservations on an obscure project that Roger Caillois had launched, which ambiguously called for ‘un « ordre » aristocratique, ésotérique, mais « sévissant à travers la terre entière » et « portant la vie au comble de la volonté de puissance et de l’ironie »’.<sup>1291</sup> Rougemont emphasised that *Acéphale* was incapable of positive action and potentially dangerous.<sup>1292</sup> He implied that only personalism, and ON in particular, could give the adequate response to collectivism.

Keller has established that the personalists, Rougemont and Landsberg in particular, rejected the *Collège de Sociologie*’s attempts to revive pagan rituals and seek self-divinisation through esoteric practices.<sup>1293</sup> As early as the 1960s, Jean Wahl, the chief interpreter of Kierkegaard in France and a former participant in the discussions of the *Collège de Sociologie*, suggested a parallel between Bataille, Klossowski, and Rougemont, on the

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<sup>1288</sup> See my Chapter 6.

<sup>1289</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Retour de Nietzsche', *Esprit*, 56 (May 1937), 314.

<sup>1290</sup> Rougemont, 'Retour de Nietzsche', 314.

<sup>1291</sup> Rougemont, 'Retour de Nietzsche', 314-15.

<sup>1292</sup> Rougemont, 'Retour de Nietzsche', 314-15.

<sup>1293</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 344-5.

question of sensual love and mystical union.<sup>1294</sup> It is Keller's great merit to have read the *Journal d'Allemagne* and *L'Amour et l'Occident* not only as anti-fascist essays – a common and unchallenged line of interpretation – but also as a response to the peculiar debate on mystical union and self-divinisation taking place in 1937-9, between the *Collège de Sociologie* and the personalists.<sup>1295</sup> One may regret that Keller drew conclusions without always systematically quoting his sources, so that his demonstration sometimes seems confused. I shall now show how the question of mysticism was relevant to personalism.

In most religions, the question of mystical theology can be summarised by the following alternative: either the union with God is necessarily an illusion and a heresy (God being totally other); or there is a possibility, no matter how inconceivable in rational terms, that God may unite Himself with His creature. This alternative matters in personalist philosophy, whether religious or agnostic: if the person is defined as the individual *in relation* to others, and if there is a God, then it becomes essential to know what kind of relation there may be between the human person and God. Mystical theology deals precisely with the quality of this relation.

With the pretext of a book review on the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, in *Esprit* in September 1937, Rougemont insisted on the ambivalence of seeking mystical experience, from his personal(ist) point of view.<sup>1296</sup> He made a rather sweeping statement: 'l'idéal de « dépersonnalisation » ou d'anéantissement du moi [...] est sans conteste celui de tous les mystiques, orientaux ou occidentaux, païens ou chrétiens, hétérodoxes ou orthodoxes.'<sup>1297</sup> To annul the self could be interpreted in two ways, and only the second, as

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<sup>1294</sup> Discussing Bataille, Wahl wrote: 'nous pouvons nous interroger sur les ressemblances avec la thèse de de Rougemont et avec les oeuvres de Pierre Klossowski. Que viennent signifier les citations de sainte Catherine de Sienne et de sainte Thérèse? [...] le lien - très discutable - de la mystique et du sado-masochisme [...] l'on peut conclure qu'il ne s'agit pas là d'union mystique mais de poursuite païenne d'une volupté.' See Jean Wahl, 'Le pouvoir et le non-pouvoir', *Critique* (Sept. 1963), 787.

<sup>1295</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, esp. 343-9.

<sup>1296</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was an eighteenth-century Swedish dignitary who believed that he had the power to communicate with spirits and angels and that these beings would help him fulfil the task allotted to him by God, namely to reveal the hidden meaning of Scripture and to usher in the new Church (the Swedenborgian Church is still alive to this day). According to Ackermann, Rougemont developed a 'goût pour des spiritualités marginales' in his student years, and he became familiar with Swedenborgian thought in the mid-1920s. Ackermann, *Denis de Rougemont, une biographie intellectuelle*, 1, 147-8.

<sup>1297</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', *Esprit*, 60 (Sept. 1937), 787.

we shall see, was compatible with personalism. In the first interpretation, the ‘anéantissement du moi’ meant ‘la suppression radicale de toute conscience personnelle et de toute responsabilité, identité, ou vocation distincte.’<sup>1298</sup> This led to the total negation of the person – and of personalism.

Rougemont perceived in ‘l’éthique collectiviste’ a tendency to give up responsibilities, in particular ‘chez les jeunes écrivains français et belges’.<sup>1299</sup> When he attacked collectivism as a flight from personal responsibility, Rougemont echoed an interpretation put forth by the ON group. In April 1936, the ON (perhaps Rougemont) had introduced a study by ‘un de nos amis de province’ (Pierre Gardère), by challenging the view that ‘la fusion, l’évanouissement de l’individu dans le groupe demande à l’homme un effort de renoncement.’<sup>1300</sup> It was easy to give in to the general movement, the ethics of the herd. By contrast, it was a constant struggle to be a free and responsible person.<sup>1301</sup>

The struggle to stand free and responsible could involve self-denial, but of a particular kind, Rougemont emphasised: ‘un effort de l’homme pour se libérer de sa *personnalité* (ou de son individualité) [...] telle qu’il la développait pour ses fins propres, individuelles, individualistes.’<sup>1302</sup> To fight against individual egoism was the second interpretation of self-denial, according to Rougemont. Properly understood, it could underpin ‘l’*ascèse personnaliste*’.<sup>1303</sup> ‘Il s’agit [...] de la lutte entre le vieil homme et le nouvel homme, entre l’individu et la vocation qu’il se reconnaît, [...] entre la personnalité, naturelle ou factice (ou

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<sup>1298</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 787.

<sup>1299</sup> We can surmise that he was referring to writers close to the personalists (otherwise he would not have refrained from mentioning their names), whom he disliked, such as Raymond de Becker, for example. Raymond de Becker was a Belgian Catholic youth leader, who called for an ideal community of saints in the 1930s, before finding his way to national-socialism. His post-war works explore both Eastern spiritualities and homoeroticism, in a further variant of the 1930s concern with mysticism and love.

<sup>1300</sup> (Introduction to) ‘Contributions à la psychologie du Jacobin’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 39.

<sup>1301</sup> ‘Nous pensons, au contraire, que c’est l’accession au plan de la personne qui exige de l’individu effort et renoncement, dans ce que ce dernier a de valable et d’authentique. L’individu tend, en effet, naturellement vers l’absorption de son être dans le groupe. L’éthique du troupeau, de la masse, a toujours été, pour les hommes, la grande tentation, la voie de la facilité.’, quote from the introduction to ‘Contributions à la psychologie du Jacobin’, *L’Ordre Nouveau*, 30 (15 Apr. 1936), 39.

<sup>1302</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 787.

<sup>1303</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 787-8.

« personnage ») et la personne.<sup>1304</sup> Whereas the first form of self-denial aimed at the annihilation of personal consciousness and led to the loss of a distinct vocation, the second form of self-denial helped achieve the personal vocation of each.

With this contrast, Rougemont raised the question of the connection between personalist spirituality and asceticism. He thus started a debate on personalism and mysticism, ‘qu’il faudra, évidemment, que nous traitions un jour en toute franchise, entre croyants de confessions différentes et incroyants personalistes.’<sup>1305</sup> This was not necessarily a Christian debate. One may note, for example, that the position of the Jewish personalist philosopher Martin Buber was strikingly similar to Rougemont’s.<sup>1306</sup>

Paul-Ludwig Landsberg, the main philosopher at *Esprit* in the late 1930s and a specialist of Spanish Catholic mystics, continued the debate on the connection between personalism and mysticism in January 1938.<sup>1307</sup> Originally a German Jew, expelled from Nazi Germany and then from Spain with the Civil War, Landsberg fought against nazism unto death (in the literal sense).<sup>1308</sup> For this, he searched for an energy that he did not find in rationalist approaches. Thomas Keller has compared the political and theological positions of Rougemont and Landsberg, and I shall not belabour their opposition to fascist and Nazi ideologies here.<sup>1309</sup> Keller has argued that mystical experiences appealed to Landsberg in a way that seemed dangerous to Rougemont, and he has interpreted this disagreement as an

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<sup>1304</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 788.

<sup>1305</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 788.

<sup>1306</sup> In the following passage in particular: ‘Ce n’est pas que l’on renonce au *Je*, comme le croit généralement le mysticisme : le *Je* est indispensable à toutes les relations, donc aussi à la plus haute, qui ne peut se nouer qu’entre le *Je* et le *Tu* ; ce n’est pas au *Je* que l’on renonce, mais à ce faux instinct du *Soi* qui pousse l’homme à fuir ce monde incertain, inconsistant, éphémère, confus, dangereux, qui est le monde de la relation, et à se réfugier dans l’*avoir* des choses.’ Martin Buber, *Je et Tu* (Translated by Geneviève Bianquis, Philosophie de l’Esprit. Paris, 1938), 117. This translation is posterior to Rougemont’s article, but the personalists of the Ordre Nouveau group read Buber in German and discussed his philosophy. (Rougemont had a copy of Martin Buber, *Die Frage an den Einzelnen* (Berlin, 1936).) On transfers from Buber, see Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 242-3.

<sup>1307</sup> See the text of a ‘Conference Esprit’ in Brussels, ‘Introduction à une critique du mythe’, first published in *Esprit* in February 1938, in Paul L. Landsberg, *Problèmes du personalisme* (Collection Esprit. Paris, 1952), 49-82. Landsberg’s critique of political myth is an attack on Bataille, among others.

<sup>1308</sup> Landsberg died in the Oranienburg concentration camp. His works were published in the *Esprit* series in France, see Landsberg, *Problèmes du personalisme*.

<sup>1309</sup> Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 343-9; Keller, ‘Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier’, 121-46.



instance of the divergence between the ON and *Esprit*.<sup>1310</sup> However, I shall show that Rougemont's reservations were his own.

In his 1937 article on mysticism in *Esprit*, Rougemont regretted he could not 'préciser mes propres réserves à l'endroit de la mystique'.<sup>1311</sup> He would do so in 1938, writing *L'Amour et l'Occident*. Significantly, the conclusion to *L'Amour et l'Occident* – first published in *Esprit* in November 1938 – addressed the question of mystical love.<sup>1</sup> Rougemont gave two concrete examples, Søren Kierkegaard and Saint John of the Cross, before stating his personal(ist) choice.

First, Rougemont rejected all attempts to explain away Kierkegaard's famous breakup with Regine Olsen in psychological or medical terms.<sup>1313</sup> In Kierkegaard's works, Rougemont had underlined the connection between Kierkegaard's experience of unhappy human love, and how he imagined the sorrowful love of God.<sup>1314</sup> Thereafter, he suggested that Kierkegaard's 'secret' might lie in the belief that 'l'homme fini et pécheur ne saurait entretenir avec son Dieu – qui est l'Eternel et Saint – que des relations d'amour *mortellement* malheureux.'<sup>1</sup> Yet Rougemont was cautious not to judge 'la vocation vraiment unique du Solitaire'.<sup>1316</sup> Nor did he condemn Saint John of the Cross, well-known in the Catholic tradition for his

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<sup>1310</sup> Referring in particular to Marc's criticism of *Esprit*, summarised in Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe*, 426.

<sup>1311</sup> Rougemont, 'Martin Lamm: Swedenborg', 788 n1.

<sup>1312</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', *Esprit*, 74 (Nov. 1938), esp. 253-6.

<sup>1313</sup> In his 1934 preface to the first biography of Kierkegaard in French, Rougemont protested against the secular *a priori* of the author, cf. Karl Koch, *Søren Kierkegaard* (Translated by A. Nicolet and F. J. Billeskov Jansen. Paris, 1934). A similar protest could be made about the latest biography of Kierkegaard, otherwise remarkable: Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Translated by Bruce Kirmmse. Princeton, 2005).

<sup>1314</sup> 'Il y eut jadis un peuple fort entendu aux choses divines, or ce peuple croyait qu'on mourait de voir le dieu. [a reference to Exodus] *Qui comprend cette contradiction de la douleur : ne point se révéler, et faire mourir l'amour ; se révéler, et faire mourir l'aimée ?*' The emphasis is Rougemont's, in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, 21R C79 Soeren Kierkegaard, *Riens philosophiques* (Translated by Knud Ferlov and Jean J. Gateau, Les Essais III. Paris, 1937), 88. In the example of a King marrying a handmaiden, supposed to illustrate the difference between infinite love and human love, which emphasised the ultimate solitariness of the King, Rougemont read: 'K et Régine. K est ici à R. ce que Dieu à l'homme !', annotations by Rougemont in the margin, see BPUN, Fonds Rougemont, 21R C79: Kierkegaard, *Riens philosophiques*, 84.

<sup>1315</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 254. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1316</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 255.

descriptions of a mystical marriage with God.<sup>1317</sup> Thus, Rougemont did not reject Catholic mysticism, contrary to what a hasty reading of Keller might lead one to think. He simply insisted on the fact that united persons were still different persons, so that even mystical union took place ‘dans la dualité, qui n’est plus qu’un dialogue de grâce et d’obéissance’.<sup>1</sup> Rougemont stressed diversity in unity. This is of paramount importance for his personalism.

His personal(ist) conclusion on passionate love was derived from his understanding of mystical union: ‘Dans l’analogie de la foi, l’on peut alors concevoir que la passion, née du mortel désir d’union mystique, ne saurait être dépassée et accomplie que par la *rencontre* d’un *autre*, par l’admission de sa vie étrangère, de sa personne à tout jamais distincte, mais qui offre une alliance sans fin, un dialogue vrai.’<sup>1319</sup> The emphasis on the other, forever distinct, and the prominence of encounter and dialogue characterize the personalism proper to Denis de Rougemont.

## Two articles in *Esprit*

*L’Amour et l’Occident* was published and publicized by the personalist network in France. At the end of June 1938, Rougemont sent the full draft of his *L’Amour et l’Occident* to Daniel-Rops, the editor of the ‘Présence’ series at Plon (which for instance published Charles de Gaulle’s *La France et son armée* and a translation of Aldous Huxley’s *End and means*).<sup>1320</sup> Daniel-Rops, a member of the ON like Rougemont, had already solicited Rougemont’s contributions to the ‘Présence’ series in 1937.<sup>1321</sup> Interviewed by Eugénie

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<sup>1317</sup> This subject was especially well-known in France through the studies of Jean Baruzi, which Rougemont mentioned in his bibliography. They had inspired Emmanuel Mounier to contemplate writing a thesis on Spanish mysticism.

<sup>1318</sup> Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 256.

<sup>1319</sup> Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 256. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1320</sup> Daniel-Rops to Rougemont, 3 July 1938, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, ‘[Oeuvres:] *L’Amour et l’Occident*’, folder 5 (provisional classification).

<sup>1321</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Changer la vie ou changer l’homme?’ *Le Communisme et les Chrétiens* (Paris, 1937), 212-32; Rougemont, ‘Vocation et destin d’Israël’, 143-61.

Hélisse (another personalist and one of the few women in the ON), Rougemont explained that his primary concern in *L'Amour et l'Occident* was the modern 'crise du mariage'.<sup>1322</sup>

In the following sections, we shall see how the historical argument for which *L'Amour et l'Occident* became famous was only secondary to Rougemont.<sup>1323</sup> What was essential was his advocacy of personal love. It was through his reflection on marriage and fidelity that Rougemont was led to reconsider the myth of passionate or romantic love, as exemplified by Tristan and Iseult. The crisis of marriage in contemporary society was the subject of Rougemont's last two chapters, first published as articles in *Esprit*, in September and November 1938.<sup>1324</sup> These two articles aimed at a personalist answer to the question of infidelity in love and the increasing number of divorces in 1930s Europe.<sup>1325</sup>

## Freedom and myths

Rougemont's article 'La passion contre le mariage' started with a recapitulation of the historical argument that *L'Amour et l'Occident* developed.<sup>1326</sup> We may in turn summarize Rougemont's thesis in W.H. Auden's words:

At the root of the romantic conception of ideal sexual passion lies Manicheism, a dualistic heresy introduced into Europe from the East, which held matter to be the creation of the Evil One and therefore incapable of salvation. From this it follows that all human institutions like marriage are corrupt, and perfection can be reached only by death, in which the limitations of matter are finally transcended and the soul is merged into the infinite nothingness of the Logos.<sup>1327</sup>

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<sup>1322</sup> Interview of Denis de Rougemont by Eugénie Hélisse, 'Du mythe de Tristan et Iseult à l'hitlérisme', *Tribune de France*, 14 July 1939.

<sup>1323</sup> See the polemic in *Esprit* between Rougemont and Henri Marrou.

<sup>1324</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)'; Denis de Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', *Esprit*, 72 (Sept. 1938). In the English edition: Denis de Rougemont, *Passion and society* (Translated by Montgomery Belgion. London, 1940), 283-335.

<sup>1325</sup> It may seem ironic that Rougemont would be unfaithful to his wife between 1943 and 1945, and end up divorcing her in 1951. See the comment of his father, Georges de Rougemont: 'L'auteur de « *L'Amour et l'Occident* » divorçant, quelle douloureuse ironie !', in his letter to Pierre Maury, 24 July 1946, copy of the letter in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont papers, 'Correspondance'.

<sup>1326</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 652-3. This would be chapter VI of *L'Amour et l'Occident*.

<sup>1327</sup> W. H. Auden, *The Nation*, (28 June 1941), 756.

According to Rougemont, the European literature on love (that is most of European literature) bore traces of the Manichean myth, albeit in a distorted and secularised form. In 1937-8, the question of the psychological role and power of myths was debated at the *Collège de Sociologie*: for instance, Roger Caillois wrote a book on myth and culture.<sup>1328</sup>

Debates at the *Collège de Sociologie* showed that myth is not a collection of errors or a world of unchecked emotions, but a total way of thinking and symbolizing, which exists at the beginning of human culture, and subsequently remains as a symbolic form.<sup>1329</sup> Myths, whether political or otherwise, were impervious to argument, even if philosophy can warn us of their existence and possible consequences. By denouncing literary myths, Rougemont sought to warn against them and possibly to liberate from them.<sup>1330</sup> Tristan was the myth of the loss of freedom in passion. Loss of freedom was particularly topical in the Europe of 1938, both in private and public realms.

The article published in *Esprit* sought to assess the damage of the myth of passion-love in contemporary society, and warn about the loss of personal freedom. Rougemont found two main consequences of the myth of passion-love. The first was the contemporary idea that passion is something morally noble, and that it raises the lover above social barriers.<sup>1331</sup> This could be seen as a distant consequence of the ennoblement of low born troubadours who knew how to sing Love (that is, belonged to the Cathar faith, according to Rougemont's theory), in twelfth-century Provence. The second consequence of the myth was that 'l'homme de la passion attend de l'amour fatal quelque *révélation*, sur lui-même ou la vie en général : dernier relent de la mystique primitive.'<sup>1332</sup> In reality, Rougemont remarked, passion led to servitude; 'Je nommerai libre un homme qui se possède. Mais l'homme de la passion cherche

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<sup>1328</sup> See Roger Caillois, *Le Mythe et l'homme* (Les Essais. vol. VI. Paris, 1938). Dedicated to Rougemont 'avec toutes les sympathies de l'esprit', see his personal copy in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, 21R B158.

<sup>1329</sup> This bears comparison with Ernst Cassirer, *The myth of the state* (London, 1946).

<sup>1330</sup> In 1937, Rougemont had already applied this method to the myth of the lost shadow (cf. the story of Peter Schlemihl, by Adelbert von Chamisso), which he interpreted as the myth of the loss of creativity; see the reprint of Rougemont's analysis in Denis de Rougemont, 'Chamisso ou le mythe de l'ombre perdue', in Albert Béguin (ed.) *Le romantisme allemand, Cahiers du Sud* (Paris, 1949), 276-84.

<sup>1331</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 660-1.

<sup>1332</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 660. Cf. Rougemont, *Passion and society*, 293.

au contraire à être possédé, dépossédé, jeté hors de soi, dans l'extase.'<sup>1333</sup> Rougemont rejected passionate love because of the servitude it entailed.

Lack of personal freedom was also obvious in the search for one's type of woman (Rougemont wrote from an exclusively masculine point of view). He was aware that psychology and psychoanalysis could help explain one's type of woman: the type would correspond to the mother image. He implicitly referred to Jung's analysis of 'archetypes'.<sup>1</sup> His knowledge of Freudian and Jungian theories is striking for the time. Jung was starting to investigate what he saw as the deepening spiritual crisis of Western civilisation in psychological terms. Rougemont agreed with Jung that the search for one's 'type' was no longer an individual problem, but marked a broader cultural crisis.

Contemporary society was increasingly determined by sheep-like aesthetics: 'le panurgisme esthétique atteint de nos jours une puissance inconnue, développée par tous les moyens techniques, et bientôt politiques, en sorte que le choix d'un type de femme échappe de plus en plus au mystère personnel'.<sup>1335</sup> The mystery of each human person – that which is particular and therefore infinitely precious in each – seemed to be less significant than a standardized idea of beauty. Advertising and Hollywood had become the two judges of beauty in liberal countries.

As for 'totalitarian' regimes, they strove for the utmost standardization. In Nazi Germany, the Ministry of Propaganda claimed to define scientifically the suitable type of woman.<sup>1336</sup> More seriously still, Rougemont warned that in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, marriage was promoted 'sur des bases strictement utilitaires, collectivistes et eugéniques, et dans une atmosphère où les problèmes individuels tendaient à perdre toute

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<sup>1333</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 660.

<sup>1334</sup> 'Archetypes' are, according to Jung, instinctual patterns of cognition and behaviour which are common throughout the human species and constitute an inherited 'collective unconscious'. Jung gave a definition of his 'archetypes' in Siehe, *Psychological factors determining human behavior* (Harvard, 1936), also in C. G. Jung, *Psychologie und Religion* (Zürich, 1940), 186. See Rougemont's own copy in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, 21R C217.

<sup>1335</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 661.

<sup>1336</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 669.

espèce de dignité, de légitimité'.<sup>1337</sup> Against standardisation, utilitarianism and eugenics, Rougemont called on a personalist approach to marriage. This was the subject of the following chapter/article, 'L'amour action ou de la fidélité', published in *Esprit* in November 1938.<sup>1338</sup>

### **Faith and fidelity**

'L'amour action ou de la fidélité' offered a 'parti-pris tout personnel', what one could call an 'existential' choice, following from Rougemont's idea of personal(ist) commitment.<sup>1</sup> Rougemont's *parti-pris* was that of fidelity in marriage. Rougemont had spent his youth dreaming about romantic love and he had experienced passion. But after marrying Simone Vion, in the summer of 1933, he rejected romantic passion – at least at the time when he was writing *L'Amour et l'Occident*.<sup>1340</sup> And it was his personal decision that he offered to the reader: 'Je ne pouvais écrire un livre entier sur la passion sans achever ma description par ce trait qui enfin la situe, non dans l'abstrait où la passion ne peut exister [...] mais dans le choix qui détermine une existence.'<sup>1341</sup> To reject passion could only be a personal choice of existence.

Thus, *L'Amour et l'Occident* was the result of an 'existential' choice, rejecting passion-love as evil. Rougemont's main source of inspiration, like most philosophers of existence in the twentieth century, was Kierkegaard. He offered a personalist and Protestant interpretation of Kierkegaard, which remains largely unknown to date. It is surprising that Kierkegaard's influence, which can be traced on practically every page of *L'Amour et l'Occident*, has never been commented upon.

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<sup>1337</sup> Rougemont, 'La passion contre le mariage', 666-70.

<sup>1338</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 231-56.

<sup>1339</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 233.

<sup>1340</sup> For details (some real, some imagined) about Rougemont's romantic life, see Campiche, *Denis de Rougemont, Le séducteur de l'Occident*; Christian Campiche, *Le Nègre de la Rose, De Rougemont, Consuelo, Saint-Exupéry* (Grolley, 2004). Ironically, in these romanticized biographies, Rougemont is the victim of his contempt for historical accuracy, which I shall detail below.

<sup>1341</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 233. The emphasis is his.

Following Kierkegaard (who explained that it is impossible to study evil from the outside, as an object), Rougemont asked: ‘Mais peut-on décrire la passion ? On ne décrit pas une forme d’existence sans y participer, fût-ce même par une révolte contre la décision dont elle est née.’<sup>1342</sup> Rougemont had decided to defend marriage. He was aware, when he referred to Kierkegaard in defence of marriage, that Kierkegaard had given us one of the most vigorous denials of marriage, with his rupture with Regina Olsen.<sup>1343</sup> He explained the contradiction through ‘la vocation vraiment unique du Solitaire.’<sup>1344</sup> Furthermore, one can add that philosophical justification has not always gone in hand with biographical exemplarity.<sup>1345</sup>

In the concluding chapter of *L’Amour et l’Occident*, Rougemont paid tribute to Kierkegaard, both explicitly and implicitly.<sup>1346</sup> He quoted a French translation of Kierkegaard’s *Fear and trembling*, written under the pseudonym of Johannes de Silentio, which is a reflection upon faith, and the presumptuousness of wanting to go further beyond faith.<sup>1347</sup> Rougemont’s argument on marriage and fidelity, bears a striking similarity to Kierkegaard’s study of faith in *Fear and trembling*. I argue that the message of *L’Amour et l’Occident* on fidelity restates Kierkegaard’s message on faith. Kierkegaard asks:

Where will it all end when in our age, as declared in so many ways, one does not want to stop with love? In worldly shrewdness, in petty calculation, in paltriness and meanness, in everything that can make man’s divine origin doubtful. Would it not be best to remain standing at faith and for him who stands to see to it that he does not fall, for the movement of faith must continually be made by virtue of the absurd, but yet in

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<sup>1342</sup> Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 231.

<sup>1343</sup> See the passage starting with ‘Et Kierkegaard a raison plus qu’eux tous’ until ‘Et comment réfuter ce furieux ?’, which shows the deference of Rougemont for Kierkegaard. Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 234. See also Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’Occident*, 200.

<sup>1344</sup> Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 255.

<sup>1345</sup> Rougemont would illustrate the saying ‘do what I say, not what I do’ when he had a famous affair with Consuelo de Saint Exupéry (and, apparently, his wife with another married man). On the Consuelo affair, see the correspondence between Claude Chevalley, Simone and Denis de Rougemont (6 letters, 1945-50), in Claude Chevalley’s private papers (Royan), copies of which were kindly forwarded by Christian Roy.

<sup>1346</sup> To mention but one implicit reference to Kierkegaard, see the interpretation of Abraham as a prototype of the movement to faith in Rougemont, ‘L’amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)’, 241.

<sup>1347</sup> Rougemont had a copy of Søren Kierkegaard, *Crainte et Tremblement* (Translated by P.-H. Tisseau, Philosophie de l’Esprit. Paris, 1935). (Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel, 21R C58).

such a way, please note, that one does not lose the finite but gains it whole and intact.<sup>1348</sup>

This passage from the preface of *Fear and trembling* encapsulates Rougemont's philosophical message in *L'Amour et l'Occident*. There have been many analyses of Rougemont's defence of fidelity,<sup>1349</sup> but none has noticed that Rougemont took Kierkegaard's message on faith and adapted it to fidelity in marriage. Playing with the etymology, Rougemont equated faith and fidelity. The conclusion to *L'Amour et l'Occident* could be paraphrased thus: through the movement of faith (fidelity in marriage) continually made by virtue of the absurd, one does not lose the finite (love for the other person) but gains it whole and intact.<sup>1350</sup>

Rougemont argued that the modern crisis of marriage largely came from people's need for rational motivations for marriage – this was petty calculation.<sup>1351</sup> To think that one could remain faithful throughout life changes was absurd, so marriage ought to be the subject of a bet 'en vertu de l'absurde'.<sup>1352</sup> In Kierkegaard's terms, 'by virtue of the absurd' meant 'a leap of faith'.<sup>1353</sup> By emphasising the *movement* of faith made *continually* by virtue of the absurd, Kierkegaard provided Rougemont with a dynamic understanding of fidelity. Far from being a stubborn attitude – whereby the spouses had to stick to a decision once made and never move on, fidelity was dynamic, active, positive, and creative.<sup>1354</sup>

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<sup>1348</sup> I refer to the English translation for convenience, see Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and trembling ; Repetition* (Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings. vol. VI. Princeton, 1983), 88.

<sup>1349</sup> For a contemporary appraisal of Rougemont's message, albeit weak in its theological argument, see Michel Feher, 'L'amour conjugal chez Denis de Rougemont, ou la gracieuse absurdité du mariage', *Esprit*, 8-9 (Aug.-Sept. 1997), 33-51.

<sup>1350</sup> I have put in parenthesis Rougemont's interpretation, as it appears from Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', esp. 254-5.

<sup>1351</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 236-7.

<sup>1352</sup> There can be no doubt that the phrase is taken from Kierkegaard: at the end of his article, Rougemont quotes '*Crainte et Tremblement*, traduit d'après la version allemande de E. Geismar et R. Marx', see Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 255.

<sup>1353</sup> Rougemont spelled out the meaning of 'en vertu de l'absurde' in his conclusion, stating that Kierkegaard (considered as a 'Chevalier de la foi') 'a tout renoncé dans une infinie résignation, et s'il a tout ressaisi par la suite, c'est en vertu de l'absurde (c'est-à-dire de la foi).' Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 255. This is a reference to Kierkegaard, *Fear and trembling*, 91.

<sup>1354</sup> In Rougemont's words, 'se contenter de ne pas tromper sa femme serait une preuve d'indigence et non d'amour. La fidélité veut bien plus : elle veut le bien de l'être aimé, et lorsqu'elle agit pour ce bien, elle crée devant elle le prochain.' Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 243.



Because Rougemont's defence of fidelity affirmed the freedom and responsibility of the human person, it was eminently personalist. Paradoxically, Rougemont stated that fidelity in marriage had become 'le plus profond non-conformisme'.<sup>1355</sup> In *Esprit*, 'non-conformisme' would have been read as a reference to personalism.<sup>1356</sup> Rougemont linked explicitly fidelity, creating an *oeuvre*, and becoming a person:

Une telle fidélité fonde la personne. Car la personne se manifeste comme une œuvre au sens le plus large du terme. Elle s'édifie à la manière d'une œuvre, à la faveur d'une œuvre, et aux mêmes conditions, dont la première est la fidélité à quelque chose qui n'était pas, mais que l'on crée. Personne, œuvre, et fidélité : les trois mots ne sont point séparables ou concevables isolément. Et tous les trois supposent un parti-pris, une attitude fondamentale de créateur.<sup>1357</sup>

In a typically personalist line of reasoning, Rougemont contrasted 'l'individu et son naturel égoïsme' with the edification of 'la personne', understood as the altruistic potential in each human being.<sup>1358</sup> The person developed not as an isolated monad, but in relation. What better relation could there be beyond faithful love? Rougemont suggested that the person who loves freely and faithfully, freely affirms his being, by means of relating to the other person. 'Ainsi la personne des époux est une mutuelle création, elle est le double aboutissement de « l'amour-action »'.<sup>1359</sup>

The opposition between passion-love (a Stendhalian expression) and action-love (his own expression) is the central theme of *L'Amour et l'Occident*.<sup>1360</sup> Only action-love was free from myths, from blind and passionate exaltation. It was the relation through which each person could freely affirm his being, his identity. Rougemont's opposition to romantic love could be called pragmatic; it was primarily personalist, for the objective was to take the persons as they are. In contrast with the tendency to make love divine in much of European

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<sup>1355</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 240.

<sup>1356</sup> See the self-presentation of personalists as 'non-conformistes des années trente', in Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente*.

<sup>1357</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 240-1. See also Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 308.

<sup>1358</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 243.

<sup>1359</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 243.

<sup>1360</sup> Rougemont developed this opposition by playing on the etymology of passion (suffering and passivity), see Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)'.

literature since the Middle Ages, Rougemont's pragmatic and personalist approach assured the success of *L'Amour et l'Occident*.<sup>1361</sup>

## The polemic in *Esprit*

Within personalists circles, however, Rougemont's essay was fiercely challenged. The publication of a review of *L'Amour et l'Occident*, in *Esprit* in April 1939, initiated an 'amicale mais violente polémique' between Denis de Rougemont and Henri-Irénée Marrou, a medievalist and a personalist.<sup>1362</sup> Since 1934, whilst writing his doctorate on Augustine, Henri Marrou contributed to *Esprit* under the pseudonym of Henri Davenson, which was derived from his Occitan ancestry.<sup>1363</sup> Rougemont answered Marrou's review in writing, and Marrou replied in a letter of 24 April 1939.<sup>1364</sup> Both letters, slightly modified, were published in *Esprit* the following September.<sup>1365</sup> Thus, *Esprit* began the 'phoney war' with a debate about love and European history.<sup>1366</sup> (To some extent, this polemic continued during the war,<sup>1367</sup> and

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<sup>1361</sup> See for example the mention by C.S. Lewis: 'St John's saying that God is love has long been balanced in my mind against the remark of a modern author (M. Denis de Rougemont) that "love ceases to be a demon only when he ceases to be a god"', in C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London, 2002), 7, also 27.

<sup>1362</sup> Henri Irénée Marrou (1904-1977) had a prominent career as a historian, from the Ecole normale supérieure and the Ecole de Rome, before the Second World War, to the Sorbonne in 1945 and the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in 1967. The quotation is from his preface to *Les Troubadours* (1971), quoted in Pierre Riché, *Henri Irénée Marrou, historien engagé* (Paris, 2003), 151.

<sup>1363</sup> Pseudonyms are always useful for writers who want a political or academic career under their real name. When writing in *Esprit*, Marrou needed to protect his identity all the more as he was doing his doctoral research in Fascist Italy between 1932 and 1937. Riché, *Henri Irénée Marrou, historien engagé*, 18, 50-6.

<sup>1364</sup> See Henri Marrou to Rougemont, 24 April 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, 'Correspondance'.

<sup>1365</sup> Henri Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', *Esprit*, 84 (Sept. 1939), 765-8; Denis de Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', *Esprit*, 84 (Sept. 1939), 760-5.

<sup>1366</sup> Winock, *"Esprit". Des intellectuels dans la cité, 1930-1950*, 158-9.

<sup>1367</sup> In 1945, Henri-Irénée Marrou continued the debate on mystical love in *Esprit*, discussing the various books that had been published on the question during the war, see Henri Irénée Marrou, 'Histoires d'amour', *Esprit*, 113 (Dec. 1945), 899-916.

until the mid-1950s, the debate on mysticism was still vibrant among third-way movements in France.)<sup>1368</sup>

It is essential to look at the polemic on *L'Amour et l'Occident* in *Esprit* in 1939 because it shows that, at the time, personalists did not fail to take *L'Amour et l'Occident* for what it was: a personalist and Protestant book (ab)using European history to compose a defence of personal freedom. The polemic began with the question of historical method, but this was only the prelude.

### Historical method and psychography

Marrou started his review of *L'Amour et l'Occident* by emphasising that Rougemont was a personalist, like him, yet he specified: 'son personnalisme reste bien à lui, essentiellement chrétien d'abord, puis protestant, d'un certain protestantisme enfin qu'il faudrait situer dans une certaine zone d'influence barthienne, mais cela commence à échapper à mon ressort.'<sup>1369</sup> Unsurprisingly, since Marrou was the most promising historian on the editorial board of *Esprit*, his objections to *L'Amour et l'Occident* were of a historical nature. I shall not belabour Rougemont's mistakes and approximations, especially since his sources have become outdated by seventy years of historiography.<sup>1370</sup> The question of method is still relevant, in so far as it brings to light the limitations inherent in Rougemont's work.

Historical method was a burning issue in the France of the late 1930s. French academia was hit by the crisis of historicism with nearly twenty years delay compared to

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<sup>1368</sup> In 1945, three philosophers and theologians (Marcel Moré, Maurice de Gandillac, and Louis Massignon) launched *Dieu Vivant*, an ecumenical journal addressing societal issues from a spiritual standpoint. The twenty-seven issues, between 1945 and 1955, have never been studied. *Dieu Vivant* was issued by the publishing house Le Seuil, which had emerged in the Resistance, in connection with *Esprit*, see *Dieu Vivant*, 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> sem. 1945), 2541 copies. The editorial board included Pierre Leyris, Pierre Burgelin, Jean Hyppolite, Vladimir Lossky, and Gabriel Marcel. The theme of mysticism was omnipresent in the writings of Marcel Moré, who came to dominate the journal. Among the contributors are mentioned in this chapter: Henri-Irénée Marrou and Myrrha Lot-Borodine, in *Dieu Vivant*, 3 (1945); Pierre Klossowski and Georges Bataille, in *Dieu Vivant*, 3 (1945).

<sup>1369</sup> Henri Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', *Esprit*, 79 (Apr. 1939), 70-1.

<sup>1370</sup> Rougemont based his historical developments on two main books, outdated today, Johan Huizinga, *Le Déclin du Moyen Age* (Translated by J. Bastin, Bibliothèque historique. Paris, 1932); Otto Rahn, *La Croisade contre le Graal. Grandeur et chute des Albigeois* (Translated by Robert Pitrou, Figures et drames du passé. Paris, 1934).

German philosophy. In 1938, Raymond Aron published his thesis, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire, essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique*, questioning positivist truth in history.<sup>1371</sup> There is a direct connection between Marrou's assessment of *L'Amour et l'Occident* and the crisis of historicism in France: in the same issue of *Esprit* where he reviewed *L'Amour et l'Occident*, Marrou discussed Aron's thesis.<sup>1372</sup> He reflected upon the limitations of historical knowledge: since history is based on people's testimonies, it depends on trust and belief, and this is why historiography is but a series of questionings and demolitions.<sup>1373</sup> And yet Marrou was adamant that historical knowledge is still valid, despite the subjectivity essential to the historian's work.<sup>1374</sup> The problem with *L'Amour et l'Occident* was simple: 'Votre livre est un livre d'histoire et vous n'êtes pas un historien.'<sup>1375</sup>

Responding to Marrou's attacks on his methodology, or lack thereof, Rougemont made clear his contempt for history as an academic discipline:

Vous parlez de l'histoire comme quelqu'un qui y croit encore, et qui escompte que le lecteur y croit. Or moi je n'y crois pas du tout. Je ne crois pas aux « faits objectifs » dont l'historien prétend communément partir. Je crois qu'il y a un matériel hétéroclite de textes, de dates, de noms de personnes et de lieux, de chiffres, de relations de gestes et de paroles, matériel avec l'aide duquel l'historien *compose des faits*, comme le poète une poésie.<sup>1376</sup>

Since the historian was playing with the past as the poet with rhymes and metre, history was just a piece of creative writing within certain rhetorical constraints.<sup>1377</sup> The dangers of considering history as a piece of literary composition are obvious. Marrou warned against them in a private letter to Rougemont, published with nuances in *Esprit* in September

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<sup>1371</sup> Although published by Gallimard, this was a Sorbonne thesis. Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire, essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris, 1938).

<sup>1372</sup> Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', 70-6; Henri Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', *Esprit*, 79 (April 1939), 11-47.

<sup>1373</sup> Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', 38-9.

<sup>1374</sup> 'Constater que l'historien ne peut éliminer une subjectivité essentielle, ce n'est rien d'autre que reconnaître que l'historien est un homme qui réfléchit sur le passé des hommes, sur *son passé*', in Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', 40. This anticipated Marrou's famous remark, fifteen years later, that 'l'histoire est inséparable de l'historien', in *De la connaissance historique* (Paris, 1954), quoted in Riché, *Henri Irénée Marrou, historien engagé*, 182.

<sup>1375</sup> Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', 72.

<sup>1376</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 760.

<sup>1377</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 761.

1939.<sup>1378</sup> The historian may not work directly on facts, as Rougemont pointed out, but documents remain, and one cannot neglect evidence when it is available.<sup>1379</sup> And again, the problem with *L'Amour et l'Occident* was that the documents available made Rougemont's historical arguments 'infiniment improbables'.<sup>1380</sup>

Rougemont dismissed this critique with an assurance that will need to be further explained below. His own historical approach was not so much the result of ignorance, but primarily the conviction that history was a creative composition. With reference to his bibliography, listing nearly 200 references in French, German and English,<sup>1381</sup> it is possible to say that Rougemont read enormously to prepare *L'Amour et l'Occident*, contrary to what he asserted in his preface of 1939.<sup>1382</sup> He rejected academic historical research on purpose.

Marrou and Rougemont agreed that history was to help us understand our personal existence here and now. Both Rougemont and Marrou declared that they began writing history from a personalist point of view or bias.<sup>1383</sup> And yet, for all their common personalist interest, they could not disagree more on historical research. For Marrou, history was motivated by the

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<sup>1378</sup> Henri Marrou to Rougemont, 24 April 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, 'Correspondance'.

<sup>1379</sup> 'Des documents, ou il y en a ou il n'y en a pas (assez) ; dans le second cas, l'historien n'a qu'à se taire, et à passer la main, – au poète. Mais alors que celui-ci précise qu'il ne fait que rêver sur un passé possible, et ne prétend à rien de plus. S'il y a des documents, leur élaboration scientifique (relative encore sans doute à pas mal de postulats, mais qu'on peut expliciter chemin faisant) permet d'endiguer l'imagination, de situer par avance les solutions possibles. Je ne prétends pas qu'elle arrive à la certitude, mais du moins, à la limite, à des jugements infiniment probables.', in Henri Marrou to Rougemont, 24 April 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, 'Correspondance'. The letter in *Esprit* repeats the same argument, with minor nuances, see Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 766-7.

<sup>1380</sup> Henri Marrou to Rougemont, 24 April 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, 'Correspondance'.

<sup>1381</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 343-51. One can also refer to the manuscript eight pages of bibliography, in a small handwriting and with most references crossed, in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*'.

<sup>1382</sup> It may be interesting to note a change in the manuscript of *L'Amour et l'Occident*. At the end of his foreword, Rougemont declared: 'J'ai vécu ce livre pendant les dix années de mon adolescence et de ma jeunesse. Je l'ai conçu sous forme d'œuvre écrite et nourri de lectures multiples pendant deux ans. Enfin je l'ai écrit en deux [quatre] mois.' In the final version, Rougemont wrote 'quelques lectures' instead of 'lectures multiples', see Ms., Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 4 (provisional classification).

<sup>1383</sup> Marrou congratulated Aron for having 'si nettement dégagé le personnalisme fondamental de la connaissance historique' and praised Aron's 'théorie existentielle de l'histoire [...] reposant sur une philosophie de l'engagement et de la vocation', which constituted a 'perspective strictement personnaliste'. See Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', 21, 41.

desire to enrich our image of humanity,<sup>1384</sup> and he criticized Rougemont for doing just the contrary, for simplifying hastily and unfairly. With his ambition to draw a great historical fresco and motivate personal commitment *hic et nunc*, Rougemont overlooked the actual people involved. Marrou remarked: ‘A chaque tournant vous vous heurtez à des noms qui sont des personnes, pourtant. Mais vous n’avez pas le temps, et d’un diagnostic sommaire, vous les étendez raides en vos casiers.’<sup>1385</sup> Marrou suggested forcefully that the historian’s role was less to judge than to recover, as far as possible, a sense of ‘l’incertitude fondamentale, si vivement ressentie par l’homme d’action’.<sup>1386</sup> He was more consistent than Rougemont as a personalist historian.

Beyond the question of method, Marrou regretted the lack of psychological insight in Rougemont’s interpretation of life histories: ‘Au fond, ce qui nous oppose, c’est bien notre psychographie.’<sup>1387</sup> Rougemont’s historical depiction lacked psychological depth. It was a pseudo-history of ideas overlooking the individuals who upheld these ideas, the circumstances in which they lived, and their actual feelings. ‘L’amour est-il une hérésie ? demande la bande de votre livre. Et vous répondez tranquillement : l’amour (courtois) est une hérésie manichéenne. Cela ne vous fait rien, à vous ; ces soupirs, cette éloquence passionnée, cette beauté intérieure, vous l’affectez du signe *moins* et vous passez outre.’<sup>1388</sup> Rougemont judged that courtly love was a heresy, and condemned all the literature and feelings related to it as negative, harmful, altogether evil. The history of *L’Amour et l’Occident* was written in black and white.

For all the contention between Marrou and Rougemont, history as such was a minor aspect of their polemic. They both admitted that their fundamental disagreement lay elsewhere.<sup>1389</sup> Following criticism of various historians in France, notably Marrou in *Esprit*, Rougemont warned the English reader in the preface to the English edition of 1940: ‘It has

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<sup>1384</sup> Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', 45.

<sup>1385</sup> Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', 73.

<sup>1386</sup> Davenson, 'Tristesse de l'historien', 43.

<sup>1387</sup> Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', 75.

<sup>1388</sup> Davenson, 'Parler d'amour', 76.

<sup>1389</sup> Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 765.

been asserted and repeated that the core of my book is the claim that the poetry of the troubadours is connected with the Albigensian heresy. Possibly this *theory* is the feature that will most forcibly strike any one who reads me hastily. But the real meaning of what I have to say lies elsewhere.<sup>1390</sup> He provided English readers with an introduction that he had not given in French: 'Let me say that my real subject is religious, not historical. It is concerned with the opposition between the passion that is expressed in *Tristan* and the Christian notion of *love*.'<sup>1391</sup> Rougemont presented the myth of Tristan and Iseult as a dangerous force with mystical origins, and aimed at expounding the concealed content of the myth, in order to break its charm. He interpreted history as one interprets literary myths.

### **Dialectical theology and history**

Rougemont presented himself as an 'interprète et théologien de l'histoire'.<sup>1392</sup> Had *L'Amour et l'Occident* had a genre, Rougemont would have wanted it to be 'un livre de théologie morale'.<sup>1393</sup> Moral theology did not refer to Kant (whom Rougemont disliked), but to the aims of *L'Amour et l'Occident*. Although this essay is virtually never presented as a book of moral theology, it is clear upon closer examination that this was the intention of the author.

When Rougemont situated the origins of passion-love in twelfth-century Provence, he oversimplified a complex history, with a view to illustrating moral decisions in the present day: 'l'histoire n'a pour moi d'autre sens que d'illustrer certaines décisions actuelles.'<sup>1394</sup> He must have been aware of the 'obvious danger in attributing the origins of romantic love to a particular state of mind prevailing at a particular moment in time', as a reviewer put it in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1940.<sup>1395</sup> Yet he tried to excuse his overemphasis on a particular

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<sup>1390</sup> Rougemont, *Passion and society*, 8. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1391</sup> Rougemont, *Passion and society*, 8-9.

<sup>1392</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 761.

<sup>1393</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 761.

<sup>1394</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 761.

<sup>1395</sup> 'Psychology of romantic love, heresies of passion', *The Times Literary Supplement*, (27 Apr. 1940).

moment by referring to his Protestant theological background: ‘Ma formation théologique protestante m’incite à rechercher, en chaque domaine, non point le général comme les classiques, ou l’Idée comme certains romantiques, mais bien plutôt le *moment décisif*.’<sup>1397</sup> There are good reasons to think that Rougemont was referring to the Kierkegaardian concept of ‘decisive moment’. It was in view of the ‘decisive moment’ that Rougemont oversimplified history in *L’Amour et l’Occident* (as in his later works on European cultural history).<sup>1397</sup>

It may be worth explaining the concept of ‘decisive moment’, to understand how Rougemont could dismiss historical criticisms by referring to his theological background. This concept was drawn from the *Philosophical fragments*, which Rougemont had contributed to getting translated into French in 1937.<sup>1398</sup> The *Philosophical fragments*, written under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus, addresses the Socratic question: ‘Can the truth be learned?’ The concept of ‘decisive moment’ is coined as a tool to go ‘beyond Socrates’.<sup>1399</sup> The *Philosophical fragments* combined a critique of the metaphysical tradition inherited from the Greeks with a desire to return to the Bible.

The ‘decisive moment’ is the moment when the learner, who is initially defined as being ‘outside the truth’, learns the truth.<sup>1400</sup> Kierkegaard, under the pseudonym of Climacus, concludes that one goes beyond the Platonic-Socratic mode in positing what the hypothesis requires: a ‘new organ’, which is ‘faith; and a new presupposition: the consciousness of sin; and a new decision: the moment; and a new teacher: the god in time.’<sup>1401</sup> Thus, *Philosophical fragments*, from the religious point of view which interested Rougemont, may be summarized

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<sup>1396</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 761.

<sup>1397</sup> To quote but the most famous: Denis de Rougemont, *L'Aventure occidentale de l'homme* (Paris, 1957); Denis de Rougemont, *Vingt-huit siècles d'Europe. La conscience européenne à travers les textes d'Hésiode à nos jours* (1st edn. Paris, 1961). This an anthology of ‘decisive’ texts for the idea of a united Europe.

<sup>1398</sup> *Riens philosophiques* was published in French in 1937, under the auspices of the Rask-Oersted fund of Copenhagen and of the the Franco-Danish Association of Paris. Rougemont played a role in this publication, although possibly in encouraging it only. Rougemont had the copy n°1669 of the ‘230 exemplaires hors commerce numérotés de 1501 à 1730’, BPUN, Fonds Rougemont, 21R C79: Kierkegaard, *Riens philosophiques*.

<sup>1399</sup> In the *Meno*, Socrates demonstrates the soul's recollection of what it knows from birth. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical fragments, or a fragment of philosophy* (Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings. vol. VII. Princeton, 1985), 179-80.

<sup>1400</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical fragments, or a fragment of philosophy*, 183, 190.

<sup>1401</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical fragments, or a fragment of philosophy*, 272.



in the following proposition: if humans are sinners, then they must be born again at a ‘decisive moment’ and be given the truth by God himself.

The concept of ‘decisive moment’ – understood rightly or wrongly– was used by Rougemont to make the question of truth (including historical truth) rely on an ‘existential’ decision.<sup>1402</sup> Therefore, all the objections of professional historians could not make him change the decision he took in writing *L’Amour et l’Occident* the way he did. Rougemont drew his contempt for academic history from a certain understanding of theology. As we have seen, Rougemont was close to dialectical theologians. Like them, he was appalled by the fact that nineteenth-century theology began seeking to understand the historical context in which Jesus lived and ended up making him a historical figure. Barth reacted against this by attempting to return to the Word of God only.<sup>1403</sup> Barth acknowledged his indebtedness to Kierkegaard, who emphasised the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity.<sup>1404</sup> History could not teach about God and was impotent in matters of faith.

A paradox remained, as Henry Corbin (one of Rougemont’s closest friends as noted already) explained in a seminal article in 1933-4.<sup>1405</sup> Dialectical theology uncovered the following question: how is it that God, whose transcendence is forever outside history, reveals Himself as a concrete relation to concrete human beings?<sup>1406</sup> Corbin assessed the meaning of history according to the premises of dialectical theology and to Heidegger’s early works, both of which originated in Kierkegaard (Corbin admittedly drew on Kierkegaard more than on Barth).<sup>1407</sup> This article was decisive in making dialectical theology known in philosophical and academic circles in France.

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<sup>1402</sup> He underlined the following sentence: ‘La conclusion de la foi n’en est pas une, c’est une décision : de là l’exclusion du doute.’, in his own copy of Kierkegaard, *Riens philosophiques*, 169. BPUN, Fonds Rougemont, 21R C79.

<sup>1403</sup> This is obviously schematic. For more details, see Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's critically realistic dialectical theology. Its genesis and development 1909-1936* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>1404</sup> See Barth’s preface to the second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans* (Engl. transl. by E.C. Hoskyns, London, 1933), 4-5.

<sup>1405</sup> Henry Corbin, ‘La théologie dialectique et l’histoire’, in A. Koyré, H.-C. Puech, and A. Spaier (eds), *Recherches philosophiques* (Paris, 1933-4), 250-84.

<sup>1406</sup> Corbin, ‘La théologie dialectique et l’histoire’, 250-84.

<sup>1407</sup> See in particular Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding unscientific postscript to Philosophical fragments* (Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard’s Writings. vol. XII. Princeton, 1992), 6.

Having read Corbin,<sup>1408</sup> Marrou was horrified by ‘la trahison plus grave encore de la pensée barthienne [avec] sa méta-histoire qui, pour retrouver Dieu, perd l’homme en chemin’.<sup>1409</sup> The infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity, emphasised by Kierkegaard and Barth, obviously implied the infinite qualitative difference between the creature and the Creator. Thus many in Europe at the time (mis)understood Barth’s theological enterprise as positing some abstract and distant Deity.<sup>1410</sup>

In his ‘Tristesse de l’historien’, Marrou showed deep concern for the historical implications of ‘la « théologie dialectique » – cette pensée si totalement hétérogène à l’histoire : pour elle il y a la Parole de Dieu, éternelle, donc toujours présente ; au moment où l’âme l’entend, réalise sa dépendance à son égard, elle s’arrête et bondit hors du temps empirique, désormais contemporaine, simultanée, *gleichzeitig* du Christ éternel. Il n’y a plus d’Histoire, mais seulement à chaque époque des âmes solitaires qui monologuent avec Dieu...’<sup>1411</sup> Marrou rejected dialectical theology not only as a historian, challenged in his profession; but also, and primarily, because he could not see the human being as a solitary soul. He suspected (with reason) that the historical approximations in *L’Amour et l’Occident* had been influenced by the meta-historical approach to dialectical theology.

It is worth noting, however, that the conclusions of *L’Amour et l’Occident* were Rougemont’s, and not by any means those of Barth or Corbin. After reading *L’Amour et l’Occident*, Corbin wrote to Rougemont: ‘Je me réjouis du malheur des « historiens », et ce ne sont pas tes démonstrations historiques qui à leur tour me gênent. Seulement, c’est très net. Je suis alors un Cathare, un manichéen etc... Quant à Tristan, mon vieux, non ! Je n’ai jamais douté de lui, et quant à en rapprocher tous vos agités, nerveux et faux passionnés, non

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<sup>1408</sup> Esp. Corbin, ‘La théologie dialectique et l’histoire’, 250-84.

<sup>1409</sup> Davenson, ‘Tristesse de l’historien’, 39.

<sup>1410</sup> In emphasising qualitative difference, Barth sought to recover the significance of Christ, scandal to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness, as (sympathetic) commentators have explained since, see Thomas Torrance, *Karl Barth, an introduction to his early theology 1910-1931* (2nd edn. Edinburgh, 2000), esp.43-5.

<sup>1411</sup> Davenson, ‘Tristesse de l’historien’, 14-15.

plus !'<sup>1412</sup> I shall come back to Corbin in the second section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that Corbin disagreed with Rougemont's interpretation of passionate love and of Cathar and Manichaen faiths.

In an unpublished note of April 1939, Rougemont remarked that he was faced two main charges concerning *L'Amour et l'Occident*: '1. de soutenir une thèse historique insuffisamment démontrée; 2. d'être dogmatique.'<sup>1413</sup> Both criticisms were justified. Rougemont dismissed them, and planned to write a book on the Reformation and Revolution, in which he thought to demystify history as an academic discipline: 'je me propose de monter incidemment la vanité totale des thèses historiques dites sérieuses (toutes contradictoires) ; et la cause générale de cette vanité : c'est qu'elles passent à côté du dogme fondamental (pour le phén[omène] qu'elles prétendent étudier) et malgré toute leur science, s'égarant dans la science.'<sup>1414</sup> There is a nearly completed draft of this book in Rougemont's archives.<sup>1415</sup> To be dogmatic, for Rougemont, was a compliment.

### **Christian dogmas and anthropology**

There was only one point in *L'Amour et l'Occident* which Rougemont was ready to discuss: 'mes conclusions religieuses et morales, ma décision, non telle ou telle hypothèse « historique » que je suis tout prêt à réviser s'il y a lieu. Voilà le point. Voilà le terrain de ma défense et aussi de ma contre-attaque.'<sup>1416</sup> Rougemont defended *L'Amour et l'Occident* according to certain moral and religious beliefs, or as he put it openly 'une certaine compréhension des dogmes essentiels du christianisme'.<sup>1417</sup> His understanding of Christian

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<sup>1412</sup> Corbin to Rougemont (postcard), 28 March 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification).

<sup>1413</sup> Rougemont, Manuscript note on the back of a letter from Robert Aron received 7 Apr. 1939, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, File: 'Inédits « Protestantisme » ou « Essais Protestants » I.'

<sup>1414</sup> Rougemont, Manuscript note on the back of a letter from Robert Aron received 7 Apr. 1939, Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, File: 'Inédits « Protestantisme » ou « Essais Protestants » I.'

<sup>1415</sup> Denis de Rougemont, '*La Réforme et la révolution*', Manuscript notes and typed draft [between 1939 and 1945], Neuchâtel, BPUN, Rougemont Papers, File: 'Inédits II. « Protestantisme » ou « Essais protestants »'.

<sup>1416</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "*L'Amour et l'Occident*"', 762.

<sup>1417</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "*L'Amour et l'Occident*"', 763, 761.

dogmas has never been examined, for it has always been assumed that Rougemont was a Calvinist and a Barthian. A closer look reveals a more complex picture than previously thought, and explains the particularity of Rougemont's personalism.

In keeping with standard Protestant views at the time, Rougemont held a pessimistic understanding of human nature since the Fall of Adam. He explained to Marrou: 'Je considère que le chrétien, c'est un homme qui choisit sans retour, et qui décide de renoncer, *comme malgré lui*, à ce qu'il y a de corrompu, de « trop humain », de sous-humain dirai-je plutôt, dans tout ce que l'on appelle l'Humain, et qui ne l'est plus depuis la Chute d'Adam.'<sup>1418</sup> Rougemont emphasised sinfulness, the incapacity of humans to gain truth on their own, and the necessity of historical revelation as the foundation of faith.<sup>1419</sup> His pessimism was alleviated by the Christian belief in Salvation and miracles; and yet, for the time being, Rougemont stressed that 'nous sommes dans le monde concret de la chute'.<sup>1420</sup> In this fallen world, there could be nothing good in the creature, save in Christ and by grace (the free gift of God).<sup>1421</sup> Rougemont spelled out the central thesis of *L'Amour et l'Occident* thus: the only love that is good for a Christian is a free gift from God.

Le seul amour qui tende vers Dieu et qui l'atteigne à travers la vraie créature, c'est l'amour qui est venu de Dieu, rendu aux hommes par le Christ, cette Agape qui seule sauvera l'Eros et qui, loin de le sublimer, lui redonnera sa juste place dans l'humain. Ma thèse centrale présentée de la sorte – n'est-ce pas assez clair dans mon livre ? – me direz-vous encore que vous êtes « plutôt contre » ?<sup>1422</sup>

The distinction opposition between *Eros* and *Agape* was made *à la mode* by a book by the Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren.<sup>1423</sup> We shall come back to this in section 2.

Rougemont's conclusion was simple: there is no point seeking sublime revelations and exalting oneself (as passionate lovers and mystics tend to do) because 'cette exaltation ne tend

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<sup>1418</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 762-3.

<sup>1419</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 763.

<sup>1420</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 763.

<sup>1421</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 763.

<sup>1422</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 764.

<sup>1423</sup> Rougemont read the 1937 German translation: Anders Nygren, *Eros und Agape* (2 vols. Gütersloh, 1937). Quoted in the bibliography of *L'Amour et l'Occident*. See further analysis below.

pas vers le vrai Dieu, ni vers la créature telle qu'elle est, mais vers le moi rêvé de celui qui s'exalte. C'est une espèce de narcissisme.'<sup>1424</sup> This sort of narcissism was the opposite of personalism, which was (ideally) open to others and loving other persons as they were.

It is clear by now that behind the polemic on history between Marrou and Rougemont lay a contrast in anthropology and theology. In his article on 'La théologie dialectique et l'histoire', Henry Corbin had put the contrast starkly – although not without prejudice: 'Chez Luther et chez Kierkegaard éclate le conflit latent imposé au christianisme par l'introduction de l'anthropologie naturaliste grecque dans l'anthropologie biblique ou judéo-chrétienne, et qui fut portée jusqu'à l'intenable synthèse de la scolastique.'<sup>1425</sup> Like Corbin in 1933-4, and following Kierkegaard, Rougemont supported a dehellenized Christianity. He wrote to Marrou: 'Voilà toute notre opposition : catholique et platonisant, vous insistez sur la nécessité d'englober toute réalité dans une synthèse transcendante, de tout sauver. Protestant, j'insiste *d'abord* sur la nécessité de distinguer l'élément décisif, ce qui sauve.'<sup>1426</sup>

Marrou made a sensible response to Rougemont: the important point for the personalist debate was not, absurdly, that Marrou is Catholic, and Rougemont Protestant. As Marrou wrote: 'l'option, *hairesis*, qui nous sépare vient de plus loin que l'opposition de nos origines catholique et protestante ; nous appartenons à des familles spirituelles irréductibles l'une à l'autre et, je le crois, également essentielles au christianisme.'<sup>1427</sup> Their opposition resulted from a difference in anthropology and in spirituality, a difference in their understanding of the human person.

Thus, when Rougemont attacked Marrou for wanting to take unto himself all of humanity – this aim was 'solidarité dans le Péché' to Rougemont<sup>1428</sup> – he was the inheritor of a certain religious tradition, which emphasised the dark side of human nature.<sup>1429</sup> Marrou

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<sup>1424</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 764.

<sup>1425</sup> Corbin, 'La théologie dialectique et l'histoire', 264.

<sup>1426</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 764. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1427</sup> Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 765.

<sup>1428</sup> Rougemont, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 763.

<sup>1429</sup> Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 765.

belonged to another tradition; ‘ainsi je me nourris pour l’instant de Grégoire de Nysse, *De hominis officio* : l’homme, dit-il, a été créé à la fois de la Terre et de Dieu, et pour jouir de Dieu, par sa substance divine, et *pour jouir des créatures*, par sa substance terrestre.’<sup>1431</sup> Marrou raised the question of participation in the divine life carefully.<sup>1431</sup> His was an optimistic view – ‘l’optimisme que je reçois des Pères Grecs, et spécialement des Pères du Désert’ – implying a positive appraisal of the relation between the person and God.<sup>1432</sup>

In sum, the disagreement between Rougemont and Marrou illustrates a difference between two types of personalism, according to two diverging worldviews and spiritual traditions. On the one hand, a certain pessimism and emphasis on sinfulness led to a warning against the dangers of seeking mystical union between the human person and the All Other.<sup>1433</sup> Rougemont best illustrated this tradition. His pessimistic view of the human person was alleviated by the constant call for action ‘by virtue of the absurd’. Hence his motto of ‘pessimisme actif’.<sup>1434</sup> On the other hand, an optimistic view of human nature, despite the Fall, maintains the possibility of deification of the human person through grace. The personalists who followed this optimistic view, like Marrou, emphasised that the person was created in the image of God, in order to become like Him. Such bold aims did not ignore the tragic situation of the world, and this tension has been called ‘optimisme tragique’.<sup>1435</sup> Thus, personalism accommodated diverging spiritual traditions, and allowed all nuances in approach from ‘pessimisme actif’ to ‘optimisme tragique’.

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<sup>1430</sup> Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 765. The emphasis is his.

<sup>1431</sup> ‘Il n’est pas vrai, bien sûr, que dans ce monde concret tout « amour » (aux nombreux sens techniques du mot) tende vers Dieu : je n’ai jamais prétendu faire mon salut en violant la fille de la concierge. « Assumer tout l’humain » est pour moi un idéal, difficile, et qui n’a de sens que mis en relation avec le dogme de la Résurrection des corps (je prends *assumer*, dans mon jargon pédantesque, au sens où on parle de l’Assomption, c’est-à-dire déification, participation à la vie divine).’ Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 765.

<sup>1432</sup> Davenson, 'Autour de "L'Amour et l'Occident"', 766.

<sup>1433</sup> Dialectical theologians emphasised that the original sin was the desire to be as gods. The first issue of *Hic et Nunc* developed this theme: Albert-Marie Schmidt, ‘Comme des dieux’, *Hic et Nunc*, 1 (Nov. 1932), 15-18; and Henry Corbin, ‘Philosophes’, *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>1434</sup> As we have seen already, Rougemont reinterpreted the saying of William the Silent, the Calvinist leader: ‘Point n’est besoin d’espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer.’ E.g. Part II: ‘Principes d’une Politique du pessimisme actif’, in Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, 77-96 (esp. ‘Sur la devise du Taciturne’, 85-92).

<sup>1435</sup> See Riché, *Henri Irénée Marrou, historien engagé*, 191.

## **2. The Eurocentrism of L'Occident**

The personalism of Marrou reclaimed continuity with both Eastern and Western Christian love traditions.<sup>1436</sup> Rougemont, by contrast, appropriated the West only. For him, personalism was to be the answer to a particular political, social, and spiritual situation in Western Europe. As he started to write *L'Amour et l'Occident*, in January 1938, Rougemont asserted: 'Le mouvement personnaliste ne n'est constitué comme tel, et n'a pris ce nom, que parce que dans l'Europe actuelle se déchaînent des puissances de mort, spirituelles et matérielles, radicalement contraires au génie de l'Occident.'<sup>1437</sup> *L'Amour et l'Occident* set out on the task to analyse the mechanism of this Western genius, as I proceed to show in this section.

Eurocentrism was inherent in Rougemont's personalism. Rougemont assumed that Western Europe was characterised by a unique appraisal of the human person, in respect of diversity, creativity, and personal freedom, both in the private and the public sphere. Obviously, 'l'Occident' was not a geographical notion, but an 'attitude', which Rougemont defended – 'mon Occident', as he put it honestly. And this attitude was said to be pluralist: 'elle suppose l'acceptation du différent, et donc de l'incomplet, la prise sur le concret dans ses limitations.'<sup>1438</sup> But paradoxically, to defend the concrete and the diverse, Rougemont undertook to divide the world into two categories, which he defined in religious terms. Before the examining Rougemont's 'paradoxes de l'Occident', it is necessary to look at the contradictions inherent in his definition of the 'Orient'.

### **Contradictions of the 'Orient'**

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<sup>1436</sup> In that respect, his position was similar to that of modern Russian religious thinkers. See Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of love in modern Russian theology* (Quincy, 1998), esp. xiii.

<sup>1437</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'Réponse', *Suisse romande*, 1, 4 (Jan. 1938), 183.

<sup>1438</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 252. Or Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 322.

*L'Amour et l'Occident* sought to defend diversity, in personal as in political relations, against the reduction to uniformity, undertaken in totalitarian regimes especially. It is ironic that, in order to defend the diverse, Rougemont imagined a single category, which he called the 'Orient', defined as 'la négation du divers'.<sup>1439</sup> The 'Orient' was not a geographical term; it was 'une tendance de l'esprit humain', which aspired to 'l'absorption de tous en Un', and aimed at 'la fusion totale avec le dieu, ou s'il n'y a pas de dieu, comme dans le bouddhisme, avec l'Être-Un universel'.<sup>1440</sup> One cannot complete a study of *L'Amour et l'Occident* without mentioning the inextricable contradictions that Rougemont's conception of the 'Orient' entailed.

To keep the debate within reasonable limits, I shall focus on two aspects overlooked in the historiography. On the one hand, it is little known that Rougemont drew on a Protestant school of comparative religious studies, which was unusually comprehensive and innovative for the time. On the other hand, Rougemont's religious description of the 'Orient' remained untenable even in terms of the information available the 1930s, as reference to the classical and patristic Greek traditions shows.

### **Comparative religious studies**

That Rougemont wrote an entire book to warn against the possible dangers of mysticism and of passionate love should be enough to revise the common representation of Rougemont as a disciple of Karl Barth. In the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Barth made clear that the only basis for theologising was faith in the scriptural revelation. Typically, a strict Barthian would focus exclusively on the Bible. Rougemont, by contrast, was interested in all kinds of literature. He drew on Barth's dialectical theology when it suited him. Bernard Reymond once remarked that Rougemont took personalism too seriously, and dialectic too lightly, to be a faithful Barthian.<sup>1441</sup> This is especially true of the late 1930s. Rougemont had become increasingly critical of dialectical theology. From the mid-1930s onwards, he rejected Barth's

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<sup>1439</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 62-5.

<sup>1440</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 62.

<sup>1441</sup> Reymond, *Théologien ou prophète. Les francophones et Karl Barth avant 1945*, 70-2.



view that Revelation was impossible in other religions.<sup>1442</sup> The bibliography of *L'Amour et l'Occident* reveals an eclectic attention to many forms of spirituality around the world. In particular, Rougemont referred to Henry Corbin and Rudolf Otto for an innovative perspective on world spiritual traditions.

Henry Corbin (who had split with Barth before Rougemont) brought his friend to reflect upon Manichaeism and Islam. Corbin had been working on the question of mystical love since 1932, with particular interest in Islam and the school of *ishraq* or Illumination, founded by Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi.<sup>1443</sup> The influence of Heidegger, whom he translated into French, was patent in Corbin's introduction to a new translation of Manichean hymns, which Rougemont used in *L'Amour et l'Occident*. Corbin saw Manichaeism as a 'dialogue du Moi à lui-même, c'est-à-dire du *Noûs* à l'âme, elle-même captive des Ténèbres : de l'angoisse et de la mort'.<sup>1444</sup> To Corbin, this dialogue, expressed in hymns and psalms, constituted the effective 'vérité' of Manichaeism. To Rougemont, there could be no truth in Manichaean heresy. Thus, Corbin and Rougemont disagreed fundamentally on 'l'orthodoxie chrétienne', despite being the closest of friends.

For Rougemont, in the 1930s at least, the ultimate criterion was Christian orthodoxy (as he understood it). For Corbin, by contrast, there was no question of orthodoxy or heresy, but simply the question of human existence before God. While Corbin was interested in Manichaeism from an existential point of view, Rougemont remained primarily concerned with Christian dogma. Roger Jézéquel (another friend of Rougemont and Corbin, who had been ordained since the years of *Hic et Nunc*) praised *L'Amour et l'Occident* in the following

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<sup>1442</sup> There are annotations by Rougemont to this effect in his copy of Karl Barth, *Credo* (Translated by Pierre Jundt and Jean Jundt, *Ecrivains religieux contemporains*. Paris/ Geneva, 1936), 64. Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Fonds Rougemont, 21D 87.

<sup>1443</sup> In 1932, Corbin addressed the question of Islamic Mysticism with remarkable clarity: 'la prétention des mystiques soulevait une difficulté inouïe pour la théologie musulmane, telle que l'avait constituée l'école d'al Ash'arî : face à la transcendance divine, face à Dieu représentant la totalité spirituelle, il ne pouvait y avoir « quelque chose de divin » à l'intérieur de l'homme, et c'était là tout le piège des locutions théo-pathiques.' If God is totally other, totally unrelated to the human person, there is no possibility of mystical union. 'Que le mystique parlât d'amour, cela impliquait une connaturalité, une participation à une nature commune, celle de l'étincelle au feu qui l'engendre : d'où l'accusation perpétuelle de manichéisme. C'est tout le drame de la vocation mystique d'al-Hallâj ; or Suhrawardî se rangea à la suite de Hallâj.' Both were condemned as heretics. See Henry Corbin, 'Pour l'anthropologie philosophique : un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardî d'Alep (+ 1191)', *Recherches philosophiques*, II (1932-3), 389.

<sup>1444</sup> Henry Corbin, 'Pour l'hymnologie manichéenne', *Revue de la "YGGDRASILL"*, Extrait (25 Août 1937), 5.

terms, in January 1939: ‘Cette fois tu t’es effacé devant le dogme, et l’Evangile est vraiment à l’origine comme à la fin de ton entreprise.’<sup>1445</sup> The difference between Rougemont and Corbin explains Rougemont’s presentation of Corbin as a heretic, in an ‘homage’ paid to his friend in 1981.<sup>1446</sup>

In *L’Amour et l’Occident*, Rougemont drew less on Barth and Corbin than on Rudolf Otto, another influential Protestant theologian, and the founder of comparative religious studies.<sup>1447</sup> Rougemont cites passages from Otto’s main work, *West-östliche Mystik*, which contrasted the Plotinian *Eros* with the *Agape* of Meister Eckhart.<sup>1448</sup> Following Otto, Rougemont opposed the East to the West in terms of their attitude to mysticism. Then, he linked the East with the Cathar faith and the West with Christian love: ‘L’Orient (c’est-à-dire Sankara, Platon, Plotin) et l’Occident (ici figuré par Eckhart) s’opposeraient dans les termes mêmes par lesquels nous avons tenté de distinguer la mystique des Cathares et la doctrine chrétienne de l’amour.’<sup>1449</sup> These strange associations of ideas were characteristic of Rougemont’s method. He was aware of an important contradiction: Eckhart (presented by Rougemont as the symbol of the West) was condemned as a heretic in the Christian West. For Rougemont, this was only an apparent contradiction, considering the ambivalence of mystical union.<sup>1450</sup> Eckhart could be interpreted either way: ‘Si l’âme peut s’unir essentiellement à Dieu, l’amour de l’âme pour Dieu est un amour heureux. [...] A l’inverse, si l’âme ne peut s’unir essentiellement à Dieu, comme le soutient l’orthodoxie chrétienne, il en résulte que l’amour de l’âme pour Dieu est, dans ce sens précis, un *amour réciproque malheureux*.’<sup>1451</sup>

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<sup>1445</sup> Roger Jézéquel to Rougemont, 19 Jan. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, ‘[Oeuvres:] *L’Amour et l’Occident*’, folder 5 (provisional classification).

<sup>1446</sup> Denis de Rougemont, ‘Hérétiques de toutes les religions...’ *Henry Corbin* (Paris, 1981), 298-303.

<sup>1447</sup> Otto (1869-1937) established a methodology for the comparison of religions in his *West-östliche Mystik* (Munich, 1926), and remains most famous for his emphasis on numinous experience, which ranges from a vague sense of the uncanny to explicit experiences of God.

<sup>1448</sup> Otto’s assertion that love in Eckhart is radically different from love in Plato, Plotinus and Shankara helps explaining Rougemont’s ambivalent views on Eckhart. See Rougemont’s manuscript notes entitled ‘Rudolf Otto, *West-östliche Mystik* (L Klotz Verlag, Gotha, 1929) pp. 298 et suiv. (321-330)’, in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, ‘[Oeuvres:] *L’Amour et l’Occident*’, folder 4 (provisional classification).

<sup>1449</sup> Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’Occident*, 138.

<sup>1450</sup> See the first section of this chapter: ‘The question of a mystical revival’.

<sup>1451</sup> Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’Occident*, 140.

Thus, Rougemont reached a rather laboured conclusion after a series of oversweeping arguments. He seems to suggest that the (Kierkegaardian) emphasis on the infinite qualitative difference between the human person and God made mystical love reciprocally unhappy.

### **An interpretation of classical and patristic Greek traditions**

In 1939, the inextricable contradictions in which Rougemont was caught were put clearly by Myrrha Lot-Borodine. She wrote three letters to Rougemont (in the vain hope he would publish her criticism in *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, which he edited)<sup>1452</sup> and a review of *L'Amour et l'Occident* in a specialist journal.<sup>1453</sup> A pupil of Etienne Gilson, like Marrou, Lot-Borodine was a Russian Orthodox. She assessed *L'Amour et l'Occident* in the light of her interpretation of the classical and patristic Greek traditions. I have chosen to quote Lot-Borodine at length in order to evaluate Rougemont's Eurocentric worldview without anachronistic judgement. Lot-Borodine shows how restrictive Rougemont's views of love and the Western world were, even in the 1930s and within a Christian tradition.

Lot-Borodine started her private correspondence with Rougemont with a methodological point: 'Une synthèse n'est pas identique au syncrétisme'...<sup>1454</sup> Then came the more substantial remarks. What Rougemont called the 'Orient' was an imagined category – he admitted so – and a caricature of the Ancient Greek 'Eros'.<sup>1455</sup> 'Sans parler de l'impossibilité d'insérer dans le lit de Procuste d'un dogme sentimental *tout* l'Orient (et la Chine, et le Japon et surtout l'Egypte ?), comment ne voyez-vous pas que dans *votre* Orient, – celui de l'Eros qui en fait n'a jamais dominé que l'âme *grecque* – l'union totale est impossible étant donné la

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<sup>1452</sup> Rougemont refused to publish her letter, perhaps because it was too theological for *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, which focused on topical and practical issues, such as international peace and social dialogue. On the *Nouveaux Cahiers*, see Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, 255-61.

<sup>1453</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine, 'Denis de Rougemont. L'Amour et l'Occident', *Humanisme et Renaissance*, IV (1939).

<sup>1454</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine to Rougemont, 24 Feb. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification). This was her second letter, and it was to remain private after Rougemont had refused to publish her first letter destined for *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*.

<sup>1455</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 62-3.

douloureuse *insatisfaction* qui serait l'essence même de cette Weltanschauung ?<sup>1456</sup> Whereas Rougemont rejected the Greek inheritance and its appropriation by Christianity, Myrrha Lot-Borodine praised the Greek patristic tradition and mystical theology.

She explained how, following Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, the nuptial song (epithalamium) could be a symbol for '*union mystère*. Car la *transcendance* de Dieu, particulièrement forte précisément chez les PP. Grecs, héritiers du néo-platonisme, n'exclut pas son *immanence* chez aucun spirituel, occidental ou oriental. – C'est là le mystère de la « *coincidentia oppositorum* ». <sup>1457</sup> How the absolute transcendence of God could, at the same time, allow the immanence of the divine in the human person, was to remain a mystery.<sup>1458</sup>

Myrrha Lot-Borodine went on to define mysticism – whether ancient, medieval, or modern – as the belief that the Creator gave the purpose of deification to the intelligent creature.<sup>1459</sup> She admitted the Christian appropriation of Plato, and explained the goal of deification on the basis of the biblical concept of 'image and likeness'.<sup>1460</sup> Rougemont knew this all too well. His opposition between Christianity and Hellenism, developed in *L'Amour et l'Occident*, was not the result of ignorance. Lot-Borodine continued: 'L'antinomie *Eros - Agapè* (empruntée à Nygren, cité seulement d[an]s la Bibliographie), d'origine protestante, est un contre-sens historique que les textes patristiques ne justifient pas. De même en ce qui concerne l'antithèse Lumière-ténèbre qui a un sens parfaitement orthodoxe ainsi que le prouve l'expérience des spirituels de tous les âges.<sup>1461</sup> It is possible to imagine how

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<sup>1456</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine to Rougemont, 24 Feb. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification).

<sup>1457</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine to Rougemont, 24 Feb. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification). The emphasis is hers.

<sup>1458</sup> On mystical theology as a mystery, see Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient* (Paris, 1990).

<sup>1459</sup> For more details on her thinking, one can refer to the book she published years later: Myrrha Lot-Borodine, *La Déification de l'homme, selon la doctrine des Pères grecs* (Bibliothèque oecuménique; 9 : Série orthodoxe. Paris, 1970).

<sup>1460</sup> There is a vast literature on the question of 'image and likeness' (derived from Gen I:26) and on 'deification' as the ultimate goal of life, in the Eastern patristic tradition and in modern Russian theology. For an academic, if sympathetic, summary, see Nicholas Sakharov, *I love therefore I am* (New York, 2002), 117-69.

<sup>1461</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine to Rougemont, 24 Feb. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification).

insignificant the arguments of historical misconception of patristic texts and of spiritual experience must have seemed to Rougemont.

Following Rougemont's answer – ironically showing his 'parfaite courtoisie (oserais-je employer dans le bon sens ce mot honni ?)' – Lot-Borodine recognised that their disagreement was irreducible, and she attempted to bring the debate to a technical issue:

Nous sommes aux deux pôles dans toutes nos conceptions sur le Moyen Age, la théologie orthodoxe ou hétérodoxe, sur l'amour sacré et profane... Je vous crois dans l'erreur du point de vue *historique*, toute métaphysique à part [...]. Par exemple, là où vous voyez les choses à travers le prisme néo-calviniste de Karl Barth (*hétéronomie* absolue du Créateur et de la créature), je reste fidèle à la tradition patristique et à la double expérience des spiritualités latine et grecque. Méthode plus adaptée à l'objet de nos recherches *avant* la Réforme.<sup>1462</sup>

Lot-Borodine continued making several historical points,<sup>1463</sup> all of which she developed in a book review for the specialist journal *Humanisme et Renaissance*.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent historiography has made the controversy somewhat redundant, but her review nevertheless conveys a sense of the complexity of the debate on ancient and medieval mystics, which Rougemont simply dismissed as heretical.<sup>1465</sup>

### **'Les paradoxes de l'Occident'**

*L'Amour et l'Occident* was deliberately polemical and paradoxical. Significantly, one of the sections, first published in *Esprit* in November 1938,<sup>1466</sup> was entitled 'Les paradoxes de l'Occident'.<sup>1467</sup> This section said 'exactement l'essentiel' in the view of Rougemont's

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<sup>1462</sup> Myrrha Lot-Borodine to Rougemont, 5 March 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification). The emphases are hers.

<sup>1463</sup> Rougemont took no notice of the structural modifications in Manichaeism across centuries; he was wrong to give credence to popular speculations on the Holy Grail; and students of Romance languages could easily prove – and have done so – that Rougemont, by focusing exclusively on the conventional lyricism of courtly love, overlooked the great diversity and nuances of medieval literature.

<sup>1464</sup> Lot-Borodine, 'Denis de Rougemont. *L'Amour et l'Occident*', 365-72.

<sup>1465</sup> Lot-Borodine, 'Denis de Rougemont. *L'Amour et l'Occident*', esp. 370-1.

<sup>1466</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 249-52.

<sup>1467</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 317-22.

personalist publisher, Daniel-Rops.<sup>1468</sup> The opposition between East ('Orient') and West ('Occident'), which directed the argumentation, was ambivalent – partly religious, partly political. I suggest that the interplay between religious and political motives underpins the paradoxes of *L'Amour et l'Occident*, as well as, more generally, personalism. The politics of 'L'Occident' are examined first, before a critical reading of Rougemont's East/West paradigm.

### **'L'Occident'**

Rougemont's paradoxes of 'l'Occident' fitted into an existing debate on the decadence of Western Europe in the interwar period, on the one hand, and expressed the 'neither right nor left' principle of personalist politics, on the other hand.

It may be useful to recall the fact that 'l'Occident' was the object of much polemic in interwar France. 'Europe', by contrast, was a more geographical, if vague, concept. From the early 1920s, 'la défense de l'Occident' became a crucial political issue within the French literary field, following prophecies of decadence in European literature by writers such as Spengler, Keyserling, and Hermann Hesse.<sup>1469</sup> In France, it was chiefly the 'neopacifist' (right-wing) writers who claimed to embody 'la défense de l'Occident'. In reaction, left-wing intellectuals created an Association Internationale des Écrivains pour la Défense de la Culture in 1935. The opposition between the right-wing 'défense de l'Occident' and the left-wing 'défense de la Culture' has been used by way of mapping out writers in the literary field, although it is clear that the reality was a lot more complex than such a schema allows.<sup>1470</sup> For instance, from 1936, anti-fascist intellectuals claimed to be the authentic

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<sup>1468</sup> Quote from Daniel-Rops's letter of 3 July 1938, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, '[Oeuvres:] *L'Amour et l'Occident*', folder 5 (provisional classification).

<sup>1469</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953* (Paris, 1999), 142-61.

<sup>1470</sup> Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 142-61.

defenders of 'l'Occident' through 'Culture'.<sup>1471</sup> It is important to remember that the debate on 'l'Occident' and 'Culture' was often contradictory: this was the background of Rougemont's statements on 'les paradoxes de l'Occident'.<sup>1472</sup> His position vis-à-vis 'l'Occident' was all the more complicated as he wanted to be 'neither right nor left': he was, as we have seen, both anti-fascist and anti-communist.

One of the paradoxes of 'l'Occident', according to Rougemont, was that an *oriental* anti-Christian force had brought *Western* Europe on the verge of war. This awkward argument was contrary to the popular thesis in the 1930s that nationalism and technical warfare (which led to the First World War and – it was increasingly clear – prepared for a Second) were Western European inventions, and therefore consequences of a Christian culture.

Rougemont devoted a whole chapter to linking the exaltation of warfare with Western European culture (especially courtly love).<sup>1473</sup> He maintained, however, that the Western passion for war was not Christian, and in fact did not come from Western Europe originally: 'ce n'est pas le christianisme qui a fait naître la passion, mais c'est une hérésie d'origine orientale'.<sup>1474</sup> Western Europe was split between two competing ideologies:

Il se peut que l'Occident succombe à ce destin qu'il s'est forgé. Mais il est clair que ce n'est pas le christianisme – comme le répètent tant de publicistes – qui est responsable de la catastrophe. L'esprit catastrophique de l'Occident n'est pas chrétien. Il est tout au contraire manichéen. C'est ce qu'ignorent communément ceux qui assimilent le christianisme et l'Occident, comme si tout l'Occident était chrétien. Si donc l'Europe

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<sup>1471</sup> The following quote by Aragon illustrates the intertwining of the concepts of 'l'Occident' and 'Culture': 'Et vous, vous qui êtes les défenseurs et les continuateurs de la pensée humaine, vous qui avez inscrit au seuil de ces années les mots nouveaux et retentissants de *Défense de la Culture*, reconnaissez dans le peuple espagnol, dans ce peuple dont les chants, les danses et jusqu'aux prières résument les profondeurs authentiques de l'Occident européen, reconnaissez en lui l'héroïque, la flambante avant-garde de cette culture, qui disparaîtra s'il disparaît.', Aragon, 'Pour la défense de la culture', *Commune*, 40, 15 Dec. 1936, quoted in Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953*, 153.

<sup>1472</sup> This is what the comments of the English translator suggest. To Montgomery Belgium, Rougemont's idea of linking passion-love with European warfare remained 'plutôt fantasque'. See Montgomery Belgium to Rougemont, 9 Feb. 1939, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Rougemont Papers, BPUN, '[Oeuvres] *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 1939'.

<sup>1473</sup> See his Chapter V: 'L'Amour et la Guerre', based on J. Huizinga's *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919 – *The Waning of the Middle Ages*), see his annotations in Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, 21R K199: Huizinga, *Le Déclin du Moyen Age*.

<sup>1474</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 249.

succombe à son mauvais génie, ce sera pour avoir trop longtemps cultivé la religion anti-chrétienne de la passion.<sup>1475</sup>

Thus, there was the Christian Europe that Rougemont defended, on the one hand; and all the rest (whether it be the 'Orient', Manichaeism, dualism, or the catastrophic spirit), on the other. The attempt to fit all the non-Christian spiritual traditions into one single category (the 'Orient') makes no sense for those who do not share Rougemont's conception of what is 'heretical'. A final irony is yet to be presented.

## Dualism

In writing an essay about Europe and love, Rougemont's aims were twofold: to denounce the religious decadence of Western Europe first, and then to find ways of overcoming it. To measure decadence, one had to find reference criteria. The most tangible criterion, according to Rougemont, was the increasing number of divorces and of 'délire passionnel'; thus 'la crise moderne du mariage est le signe le moins trompeur d'une décadence occidentale' both public and private.<sup>1476</sup> Rougemont found other signs of the decadence of Western civilisation, from 'le culte du nombre' (whether mass demonstrations or parliamentary democracy) to 'l'envahissement de la culture par les passions nationalistes : tout ce qui tend à ruiner la personne.'<sup>1477</sup> He suggested: 'il se peut que l'Europe, après une crise totalitaire (et supposé qu'elle n'y succombe point), retrouve le sens d'une fidélité gagée au moins sur des institutions solides à la mesure de la personne.'<sup>1478</sup> These institutions were to promote the European ethos: free and pluralist.

And here lies the irony: Rougemont sought to promote acceptance of differences with a dualist argument: the Christian West (as Rougemont defined it) vs. the Manichean East (an all-encompassing category). Rougemont claimed to have identified Manichaeism as the heresy of the whole Orient, but the nature and structure of his argument points to

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<sup>1475</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 251.

<sup>1476</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 322.

<sup>1477</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 322.

<sup>1478</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 322-3.



Manichaeism. Rougemont described a struggle between the good West and the evil Orient. In other words, it seems that he had fallen prey to the very error which he called heretical and 'totalitarian'.

That Rougemont's 'Occident' was primarily defined in religious terms is clear from the following passage:

Et j'appellerai « occidentale » une conception religieuse qui à vrai dire nous est venue du Proche-Orient, mais qui n'a triomphé qu'en Occident : celle qui pose qu'entre Dieu et l'homme, il existe un abîme essentiel, ou comme le dira Kierkegaard « une différence qualitative infinie ». Donc point de fusion possible, ni d'union substantielle. Mais seulement une communion dont le modèle est le *mariage* de l'Eglise et de son Seigneur.<sup>1479</sup>

Considering the importance of Kierkegaard's emphasis on the 'infinite qualitative difference' between God and the creature, it is astonishing that no commentator has stressed the influence of Kierkegaard on Rougemont's definition of 'l'Occident'.<sup>1480</sup> This 'conception religieuse' would require long theological discussion.<sup>1481</sup> In particular, Rougemont's distinction between communion and union may seem specious, unless it was a device to express reservations on the ambivalence of mystical union, as Thomas Keller has suggested.<sup>1482</sup>

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<sup>1479</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 63.

<sup>1480</sup> In that respect, it is significant that the 1972 reissue of *L'Amour et l'Occident*, which was announced as 'définitive', ended with a 'Post-scriptum non définitif et scientifico-polémique', in reference to Kierkegaard's *Concluding unscientific post-script to philosophical fragments*. The Post-script, like the annexes, rejected the historical refutations of Rougemont's thesis, Denis de Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident* (3rd edn. Paris, 1972), 353-433.

<sup>1481</sup> What did Rougemont mean when he dismissed the 'union substantielle'? If by 'substantielle' Rougemont referred to the essence of a thing, he wrote according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, which condemned Eckhart (among others) for identification to the divine. If, however, 'substantielle' was employed in the sense of real or true, Rougemont ruled out all mystical experience, all participation to divine life. For another personalist interpretation of mystical theology, see the contrast between Eckhart and Gregory Palamas in Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*. See also the exposé of Olivier Clément, markedly influenced by French personalism, Olivier Clément, 'Vladimir Lossky Un théologien de la personne et du Saint Esprit', *Messenger*, VIII, 30-31 (Apr.-Sept 1959), 137-206.

<sup>1482</sup> In Keller, *Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse*, 343-9; Keller, 'Discours parallèles et transferts culturels, Scheler, Landsberg et Mounier', 127-39. Rougemont's distinction between union and marriage could be a reference to the distinction between two theological notions: the Church-Mystical-Body-of-Christ vs. the Church-Bride-of-Christ. The former would tend to stress unity under the kingship of Christ; while the latter would emphasise union in diversity. In *L'Amour et l'Occident*, see in particular Rougemont's distinction between 'mystique unitive' and 'mystique épitalamique'; only the second form of mysticism, 'qui tend au mariage de l'âme et de Dieu, et suppose donc qu'une distinction d'essence est maintenue entre la créature et le Créateur' was Christian. Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 135.

Rougemont equated passion-love with *Eros* (defined as pagan love – not to be confused with sexual love) and action-love with *Agape* (defined as Christian love). Following Anders Nygren’s dual representation of love, Rougemont claimed that his ‘remarques sur la passion et le mariage mettent en lumière l’opposition fondamentale de l’Eros et de l’Agapè, c’est-à-dire des deux religions qui se disputent notre Occident.’<sup>1483</sup> The interpretation of ‘totalitarian’ systems as surrogate religions, which Chapter 6 has studied, underpins his argument. In keeping with the ‘anti-totalitarian’ aims – which inspired a bipolar worldview – Rougemont himself drew a dualist scheme opposing ‘Paganism’ to ‘Christianity’.<sup>1</sup> Expanding on it, I propose the following schema to summarize the thesis of *L’Amour et l’Occident*:

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<sup>1483</sup> Rougemont, 'L'amour action, ou de la fidélité (II)', 249.

<sup>1484</sup> See Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 65.

	<b>‘Orient’</b>	<b>‘Occident’</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Greek philosophers, Shankara, pagans, heretics, etc.	Rougemont’s view of Christianity (Following Kierkegaard)
<b>Love</b>	<b>Eros</b> Passion-love	<i>Agape</i> Action-love
<b>Aims</b>	Union-fusion	Alliance-diversity
<b>Politics</b>	Dictatorship, ‘totalitarian’ regimes	Federalist democracy, diversity in politics

It is not to diminish Rougemont’s argument to put it like this (Rougemont remarked, on several instances, that he was fully aware of schematising and simplifying);<sup>1485</sup> nor is it to devalue his talent as a popular essayist, as twofold arguments have undeniable pedagogical advantages. Incidentally, this may help explain the popularity of *L’Amour et l’Occident*, and this leads us to conclude on why Stuart Woolf has been misguided to dismiss Rougemont’s pseudo-historical works as ‘mere political federalist froth’.<sup>1486</sup>

## **Conclusion**

We have seen that *L’Amour et l’Occident* is neither a history of love in Europe, nor a political polemic about the crisis of Western civilisation. It is a book of moral theology. There are at least three layers of meaning. First, *L’Amour et l’Occident* was a call to personal and political freedom, through liberation from the myth of passion-love and nationalism, in the historical context of Europe in 1939. For personalist thinkers, as for members of the *Collège de Sociologie*, the questions of myth and mysticism were burning issues. Rougemont rejected the idea that one had to create a new mystical force to combat the myths of the state, of the

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<sup>1485</sup> E.g. Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’Occident*, 324.

<sup>1486</sup> Stuart Woolf, 'Europe and its historians', *Contemporary European history*, 12, 3 (2003), 332.

nation, and – he added – of passionate love. *L'Amour et l'Occident* was a warning, particularly directed to Catholic theologians and advocates of a spiritual third way, that the quest of mystical love may lead to delusions.

Second, *L'Amour et l'Occident* remains a précis of Rougemont's personalist thought. The themes of love and relationship allowed Rougemont to express his own views on personhood. The polemic with the personalist historian Henri-Irénée Marrou in *Esprit* explains why, once again, it might be better to speak of personalisms in the plural. Alliance and dialogue between persons forever distinct provided Rougemont's personalism with its particular character.

Third, *L'Amour et l'Occident* is an 'existential' essay, presenting a non-rational apology for fidelity, through interpretation and appropriation of Kierkegaard's concept of 'decision by virtue of the absurd'. As Rougemont defined it: 'La fidélité : c'est l'acceptation décisive d'un être en soi, limité et réel, que l'on choisit non comme prétexte à s'exalter, ou comme « objet de contemplation », mais comme une existence incomparable et autonome à son côté, une exigence d'amour *actif*.'<sup>1487</sup> Rougemont put forward personal *engagement*, as the only free and responsible attitude, both in private and public matters.

Given the fact that Rougemont's personal and 'existential' choice was based upon a dogmatic approach to faith, one might be surprised that *L'Amour et l'Occident* has become a minor classic. Indeed, *L'Amour et l'Occident* is still taken quite seriously nowadays, despite being based on a historical account that has been proved to be false since 1939. What makes its thesis enduring if historically wrong and contradictory? I submit that, for all his dogmatic statements and contradictions, Rougemont articulated a view of love with which many readers could identify. Since Denis de Rougemont was spending much time with the Saint-Exupérys in New York at the time when Antoine wrote *Le Petit Prince* (and with Consuelo after Antoine's disappearance), we may draw a parallel between *L'Amour et l'Occident* and the *Petit Prince*'s idea that outside the relation of love, the person presents no uniqueness, it is a

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<sup>1487</sup> Rougemont, *L'Amour et l'Occident*, 289.

being like other beings, a thing without a name, without a face.<sup>1488</sup> The idea, still alive today, is that the free person loves freely, and thus affirms his or her identity, his or her being, by relation to others. While not exempt from Eurocentrism and contradictions, *L'Amour et l'Occident* came as the crowning of a decade of personalist research.

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<sup>1488</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince* (New York, 1943). One could draw further parallels between Saint-Exupéry and Rougemont, in particular following the fox's idea that 'on est responsable de ce que l'on a apprivoisé'.

## General Conclusion

It is now possible to define the personalism that developed in France at the turn of the 1930s. It was both a social movement and a philosophy of existence, which sought to realize a society in which personal freedom, creativity and responsibility would contribute to the good of all, and in which each element, each institution, would be oriented towards the fulfillment of each human person. There was to be no higher goal than the person, understood as the individual *in relation* to others. The distinction between ‘personne’ and ‘individu’ was the crucial tenet defining this particular personalism. Personalism is perhaps best understood as an oxymoron: its emphasis on the concrete person opposed the ‘-ism’ of systems; and yet personalism involved a crucial point in public debate at the time. It allowed the expression of concern for a comprehensive approach to human questions, without having the contradictory connotations of humanism, and without depending on faith and religious profession.

In 1930s Europe, personalism competed with other loosely structured ‘-isms’, such as individualism, humanism, materialism, collectivism, communism, and fascism. To the objection that personalism seemed less elaborated conceptually than some other ‘-isms’, one may respond that the interest of the notion of person lay in its imperfection. The person exceeds categorisation, and stands for diversity. Personalist thinkers contributed to the reflection on the subject and on existence in the twentieth century.

The emergence of personalism in France cannot be understood as the product of French developments alone. As cultural-transfer historians Christian Roy and Thomas Keller have argued, personalist thinkers in France selectively appropriated, used and modified Russian and German understandings of the person and of personalism. Personalism was not invented by a young generation of Catholic thinkers in France at the turn of the 1930s, and it was not primarily the Catholic and leftist ideology of Emmanuel Mounier and the journal *Esprit*. In France, it was first the doctrine of ON, a non-confessional third-way movement.

To recapitulate the stages of the development of personalism(s) in France. The concept of ‘personnalisme’ was first formulated by Alexandre Marc. From 1931 onwards, personalism – which had hitherto remained a philosophical term, in Germany in particular – was developed by ON to become a social and political movement. The editorial board of *Esprit* distrusted the ON personalist revolution from the very beginning. Nonetheless, Emmanuel Mounier started borrowing personalism from ON after March 1933. At *Esprit*, personalism came to be a useful rallying-cry for a revolutionary movement based on Christian values. Mounier officially broke with ON in 1934, following *Esprit*’s shift towards the left and his decision to develop *Esprit*’s personalism with a strong emphasis on the community. However, even after the official break, the doctrines of ON and *Esprit* remained interrelated. Thereafter, and in short, one could distinguish two main types of personalism(s), and two lesser-known types in 1930s France: the federalist personalism of ON; the communitarian personalism of *Esprit*; the right-wing personalism of Jean de Fabrègues; and the ecological personalism of the South-West *Esprit* and ON groups.

Denis de Rougemont is the key to understanding the various personalist movements in 1930s France and Switzerland. Although he worked most obviously for ON, he remained the most active figure in building bridges between the various personalist groups. He thought that the doctrinal precision of ON ought to be combined with the ambiance and activities of the *Esprit* groups. The motivations for his mediation were many. His contacts in the literary field, and the fact that he was not of the highest calibre as a philosopher, form one set of explanations. It has been suggested, in Chapters 2 and 4, that Rougemont’s Swiss and Protestant identity made his mediation easier in 1930s France – a society highly polarised by struggles between the Catholic Church and the secular state. But Rougemont was also commonsensical: to be convincing about the necessity of promoting better relationships between persons, and if they were to federate European states, they had to start by overcoming their personal divisions, and by federating themselves.

In social terms, *Esprit* had a larger impact than ON, although (or because) *Esprit* was less precise (or rigid) in terms of doctrine and more welcoming as a movement. Emmanuel

Mounier worked hard to make sure that *Esprit* would be more than a French Catholic journal. His unpublished letters to Rougemont illustrate this. The success of *Esprit* owed much to Mounier's ability to remain open: he managed to avoid the social discrimination of the Maurrassians, the theological exclusiveness of the Neo-Thomists, and the doctrinal rigidity of ON. Its personalism has played a leading role in French cultural life which, until the 1960s, was based on the triptych communism-existentialism-personalism; it has durably influenced Catholic thinkers, notably Karol Wojtyła, Pope John-Paul II;<sup>1489</sup> and is one of the few journals of the 1930s to have survived until now. Thus, *Esprit* proved relatively successful both as a journal and as a movement. By keeping its personalism relatively vague, it managed to gather various sensibilities under one banner.

The personalism of the ON group remains the initial and the most creative personalism in France. A full chapter has been devoted to its political, economic, and spiritual dimensions. Politically, ON personalists departed from contemporary political theory by rejecting class struggle, national sovereignty, and international relations. ON sought to make politics serve a generous economic vision, whereby poverty and the proletarian condition would be abolished, whilst maintaining freedom and initiative as the basis of the economy. Both politics and economics were contingent upon spiritual concerns. ON personalists made earnest attempts to conceive the human person in non-confessional terms, without referring to Judeo-Christian faith. The non-confessional approach to spirituality was a difficult position in 1930s France, and it was undermined by affirmations to the contrary of some ON members. Rougemont is a fine example. He kept bringing up Christian values in what he recognised as a post-Christian society.

The personalist criticism of all European politics was very sharp, especially in *L'Ordre Nouveau*. But it is always easier to diagnose than to cure. For all their claims to be anti-nationalists, ON members continued to accept the idea that France had a universal mission to fulfil. Federalist personalism would have a second chance in the European federalist movement, which Denis de Rougemont, Alexandre Marc and Bernard Vovenne had already started to organise in 1937, as it became painfully obvious that the 'common front' strategy of

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<sup>1489</sup> Kevin P. Doran, *Solidarity: a synthesis of personalism and communalism in the thought of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (American University Studies, Theology and Religion. vol. 190. New York, 1996).



European third ways had failed. They did influence the ‘technocratic’ reforms of the late 1930s and, as some have argued, may have contributed to the demise of French democracy in 1940. This study of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont, however, leads to different conclusions.

Personalism lies at the centre of what remains highly controversial in the study of French fascism today. I have suggested that it is more fruitful to look at personalism as competing with fascism, rather than trying to decide whether the personalist third way was proto-fascist or anti-fascist. The examples of ON and of *Esprit* show that personalists fought in the same arena as fascists. This arena was situated outside the parliament and, in 1930s France, outside party politics. Personalists and fascists shared common negations, in particular anti-liberalism and anti-communism. However, the only affirmative claim they had in common was to represent European revolutionary youth. Some personalists became fascists, but most resisted, and a few fought fascism unto death. Denis de Rougemont’s example shows that the personalist weapons against fascism were not primarily rational or political; they were ‘existential’ and theological. Rougemont’s fight against fascism was a question of existence and faith. To attempt to reduce this to political categories (the fascism vs. anti-fascism debate, with a middle category: proto-fascism) is to give a deceptive, because one-dimensional, image of personalism and of fascism.

The results of Rougemont’s efforts to federate personalist movements were mixed. On the one hand, he failed to achieve a great and united personalist revolutionary movement, and he failed to develop personalism as a credible political third way in 1930s Europe. On the other hand, his efforts were not intellectually fruitless. On the eve of the Second World War, Rougemont gave a positive meaning to Swiss neutrality and helped foster Swiss federal identity. Thus, contrary to what Raymond Aron has suggested in his memoirs, personalism did matter outside the dining circles of the Parisian intelligentsia.<sup>1490</sup> When the Nazis invaded Paris in June 1940, Rougemont, called back to serve in the Swiss army, published his famous defence of Paris and the world:

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<sup>1490</sup> Raymond Aron, *Mémoires, 50 ans de réflexion politique* (Paris, 1983), 101-4, 707.

A cette heure où Paris exsangue voile sa face d'un nuage et se tait, que son deuil soit le deuil du monde! Nous sentons bien que nous sommes tous atteints. Quelqu'un disait : « Si Paris est détruit, j'en perdrai le goût d'être un Européen. » La Ville Lumière n'est pas détruite : elle s'est éteinte. [...] Je songe au chef de guerre qui traverse aujourd'hui ces rues les plus émouvantes du monde : il ne verra que d'aveugles façades. Il s'est privé à tout jamais de quelque chose d'irremplaçable, de quelque chose qu'on peut tuer, mais qu'on ne peut conquérir par la force, et qui vaut plus, insondablement plus que tout ce que peuvent rafler dans le monde entier les servants des *Panzerdivisionen*. Quelque chose d'indéfinissable et que nous appelions Paris.<sup>1491</sup>

Rougemont thus gave one of the finest defences of this indefinable European culture, and of Paris in particular. As a personalist, he managed to promote a sense of pride in one's country that was neither parochial nor nationalist, and he encouraged personal and political freedom. These were his finest achievements as a personalist writer.

My final chapter has expanded on the depth and width of Denis de Rougemont's personalism proper. The literature on *L'Amour et l'Occident* (1939) usually discusses this minor classic as a history of love and Europe, at best as a piece of anti-fascist literature. I have shown that *L'Amour et l'Occident* was not a history book, but an essay about moral theology. Rougemont warned his contemporaries against the dangers associated with mystical love, in literature, religion, politics, as in personal relationships. His thesis was based on a certain Protestant theology, interpreting Calvin, Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Otto. *L'Amour et l'Occident* was a précis of Rougemont's own personalism. A particular understanding of Christian love, as the affirmation of personal freedom and responsibility vis-à-vis other persons, is the closest illustration of what lies at the heart of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont.

This raises the problem of the intrusion of theology into politics. Rougemont's use of theology as a weapon against 'totalitarian' regimes provided him with an energy that he did not find in rationalist approaches. But his definition of the person as vocation, in a strict Protestant sense, remained largely meaningless for the unbeliever. It was also problematic for the non-Calvinist, since it implied a theology of the Fall that most confessions would reject. Of course the same cannot be said of all personalisms. Indeed, we have seen that the original

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<sup>1491</sup> Denis de Rougemont, 'A cette heure où Paris...' *Gazette de Lausanne*, (17 June 1940), 1.

personalism avoided reference to the Judeo-Christian faith. In this respect, Rougemont, who was happy to be called dogmatic, was definitely not a mediating figure.

Does this undermine the whole argument of Part I: Rougemont as a mediator between personalist movements? Quite the reverse. The personalism of Denis de Rougemont rested on an internal tension between the non-confessional policy of ON, on the one hand, and on his personal interpretation of Protestant dogmas, on the other hand. This tension illustrates the broader conflict between secularist and religious worldviews in 1930s Europe. Personalists sought to make this conflict fruitful, through a non-confessional (but not secular) approach to spirituality (and not established religions). Personalism was not only a ‘neither right nor left’ movement, but also a ‘neither secularist nor religious’ third way. It should no longer be possible to write the history of European third-way movements without considering how, in the 1930s, they sought to overcome both the ‘neither right nor left’ *summa divisio* in politics and the secularist vs. religious polarity.

In total, this study of the personalism of Denis de Rougemont has addressed three great themes. Firstly, personalism looked at the individual in relation to society. Although not a totalising philosophical system, personalism was a comprehensive political philosophy: each element, each institution was oriented towards the achievement of the person in relation to others. Secondly, personalism sought to justify and defend the dignity, freedom and creativity inherent in all human persons, from a non-confessional ‘neither secular nor religious’ point of view. And thirdly, personalism was a reflection on the place of spirituality, culture, and politics, in relation to one another.

It is now possible to answer the question implicit in this study: why did personalism develop as a revolutionary spiritual movement in the particular context of 1930s Europe? It was because small groups of intellectuals believed that the ‘decadence’ of European civilisation was driving the world into inhumanity. The most dangerous feature of the ‘crisis of civilisation’ was not, as Emmanuel Mounier had first thought, the rational onslaught on Christianity. It was rather, as Denis de Rougemont came to see it, the religious pretence of political regimes – ‘totalitarian’ regimes in particular, and nationalist regimes in general.

This explains the strong and partly irrational motivations behind the personalist opposition to parliamentary democracy, market economy, and ‘totalitarian’ regimes. With personalism, Rougemont sought to counter the worship of the state, the nation, the masses, and productivity – perceived in Fascism, National Socialism, Communism, and Capitalism respectively. In the final analysis, Rougemont aimed at a demystification of politics from a theological point of view. The idea – which was not original – was to limit the realm of Caesar to second best (or indeed third best after the economy).

There have been few political movements as thorough and ambitious as ON in twentieth-century European history. Much of its doctrinal precision was motivated by the idea that their revolution would not go wrong if carefully prepared. To think that ON could work everything out in advance was a strange idea for personalists, who claimed to oppose all systems. Moreover, one may think that since the spiritual revolution was to come from the people and outside party politics, perhaps ON would have been better advised to assume an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary approach. These two remarks are historically embedded, however. Today, one has become more aware of the dangers of trying to start society all over again, with a blank slate. But in the 1930s, revolution was a general password.

Federalist personalism was embedded in the particular setting of 1930s Paris, seen as the centre of Europe. This should prevent political groups from thinking that federalist personalism could be taken as a blueprint for a federal Europe today. To give but two recent examples in the academic world. Nicolas Tenzer has argued, strangely enough, that *La Révolution nécessaire* was premature when it was first published in 1933, but has become topical since 1968.<sup>1492</sup> And introducing the reprint of *L’Ordre Nouveau* by the Fondation Emile Chanoux and the Centre International de Formation Européenne (C.I.F.E.), founded by

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<sup>1492</sup> Nicolas Tenzer wrote: ‘Le temps n’était pas mûr en 1935 – ni sans doute avant 1968 – pour accomplir la rupture nécessaire avec les idéologies gouvernant l’esprit des peuples. Leur essai était d’une certaine manière prématuré.’, ‘Préface’, in Aron and Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, xxxiii. Nicolas Tenzer is President of the Centre d’Etude et de Réflexion pour l’Action Politique (CERAP), Maître de Conférences at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Paris, and editor of the journal *Le Banquet*.

Alexandre Marc, Marc Heim has claimed that it is not only topical to implement the ideas of ON, but also urgent.<sup>1493</sup> This is clearly not what this study would conclude.

For one thing, personalism remains important today as a work of reflection, which allows us to think about the limits of existing regimes, and the ways in which all aspects of society interact with one another. Today, it has become rare to consider the fundamental principles of political theory on the basis of a comprehensive worldview. One may draw from personalism a sense of the interconnection between the local and the global, private and public, anthropology and sociology, economics and politics, and so on. For another, one may rightly wonder if it is possible to found a shared political community upon an experience as divisive as spirituality.

Being indebted to the Western philosophical tradition, one may share with personalists the idea that personhood is indeed essential, and that institutions ought to protect and promote each human person as infinitely precious. The idea of placing each person as the ultimate goal of society is perhaps still alive. However, the doctrine of federalist personalism, which was shaped in and for the Europe of the 1930s, cannot help further. If there is a lesson to be learnt from Denis de Rougemont, it is to turn to contemporary society, and to think and act therein. For the historian, Henri Irénée Marrou may be a better example to follow: he teaches us that studying the past may help enrich our understanding of concrete human persons.

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<sup>1493</sup> To quote from his last paragraph: 'j'espère avoir atteint mon objectif : montrer l'actualité des idées d'Ordre Nouveau. [...] L'enjeu crucial, c'est de mettre ce projet en œuvre, c'est de poursuivre le combat engagé il y a plus d'un demi-siècle. « Le XXe siècle ouvrira l'ère des Fédérations, ou l'humanité recommencera un purgatoire de mille ans », prophétisait Proudhon. Il ne reste plus beaucoup de temps. Et il ne faudrait pas que nous ayons un jour à dire : il est trop tard.', in Heim, 'Préface: Actualité de "L'Ordre Nouveau"', 143. Marc Heim is Maître de Conférences, Paris-I, Panthéon Sorbonne.

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