

BEYOND NATIONALISM AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY. REVOLUTION AND THE NEW EUROPEAN ORDER OF *ORDRE NOUVEAU* (1932-1938).

DOI: 10.7413/18281567232

by **Giangiaco** Vale

Università Niccolò Cusano, Roma

Abstract

Ordre Nouveau is at once a political movement and a revolutionary project among the most original within the groups of the so-called *Non-conformistes des années Trente*, which enlivened the thriving intellectual debate of the 1930s in France. Despite the diversity of their intellectual, political and confessional backgrounds, the members of ON shared the rejection of any ideological or party commitment and a strong revolutionary impetus, going hand-in-hand with a firm pragmatism, though not lacking some utopian features. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the political doctrine of ON, placing it in its peculiar historical context and stressing its philosophical principles. Starting from some major themes such as the distrust of rationalism, the rejection of capitalism, the criticism of parliamentary democracy and the condemnation of nationalism and of totalitarian regimes, ON calls for a spiritual revolution, which should provide the foundations for a new personalist and federalist European order.

Keywords: *Ordre Nouveau*, Nation-State, Integral Federalism, Personalism, European Federalism.

1. Spirituel d'abord

Ordre Nouveau is at once a political movement and a theoretical project, among the most important and original within the revolutionary groups of the so-called *Non-conformistes des années Trente*, which enlivened the thriving intellectual debate of the 1930s in France¹. Its members rejected any

¹ Cf. J.-L. Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années Trente: Une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1969.

ideological or party attachment and, despite the diversity of their political backgrounds and confessional beliefs, shared a revolutionary impetus going hand-in-hand with a firm pragmatism, though not lacking some utopian features. Within the framework of a very rich and varied meditation, having in Kierkegaard, Proudhon, Nietzsche and Péguy its main sources of inspiration, ON's doctrine reveals a basic unity that is articulated around certain major themes such as the distrust of rationalism in the philosophical sphere, the objection to nationalism and critique of parliamentary democracy and totalitarian regimes in the political sphere, the denial of productivism and materialism (be it communist or capitalist) in the economic sphere. Based on these critical assumptions, ON portrayed contemporary society as gripped by a global crisis, and called for an equal global response laying the foundations for a new personalist and federalist order, aimed at protecting and fostering the human person before the negative shifts of liberal capitalism, collectivist ideologies and state centralism.

The *Ordre Nouveau* group was created in Paris during 1932 on the initiative of Alexandre Marc². Since 1929 the latter had been animating the ecumenical meetings of the *Club du Moulin-Vert*, attended by young intellectuals and well-renowned philosophers or theologians such as Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, Nikolai A. Berdjaev, Alexandre Westphal and Pierre Maury. Initially aimed at seeking a theological synthesis between Protestantism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the meetings soon opened up to the discussion of social, political and philosophical issues. At Marc's own initiative, in November 1930 some of the *Club's* members founded the *Centre d'études de l'Ordre Nouveau*, which organized conferences and seminars on more strictly political terrain. The joining of Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, coming respectively from surrealist and socialist circles, and of the Swiss Denis de Rougemont, a disciple of Karl Barth's dialectical theology, gave a decisive boost to Marc's operation³. During 1932 the *Center d'études* became a veritable political movement and

² On Alexandre Marc (Aleksandre Markovitch Lipiansky, 1904-2000), a Russian Jew whose family after the October Revolution took refuge in Germany (where Marc studied philosophy in Jena) and then in France (where he converted to Catholicism in 1933), see Ch. Roy, *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe, 1904-1934: «L'Ordre Nouveau» aux origines du personalisme*, Presses d'Europe, Nice 1999; J. Hellman, *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc and Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000*, Mc Gill-Queen's University Press, London 2002; G. Manganaro Favaretto, *Il federalismo personalista di Alexandre Marc (1904-2000)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006; É. Courtin, *Droit et politique dans l'œuvre d'Alexandre Marc: L'inventeur du fédéralisme intégral*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2007.

³ While Denis de Rougemont at the time was still more interested in theological questions, Dandieu and Aron had already been researching since 1927 into the same philosophical and political themes as Marc and his group. Aron himself recalled these circumstances after Dandieu's premature death in 1933; cf. R. Aron, *Réforme ou révolution*, in «L'Ordre Nouveau», 17/1935, pp. 17-18. The journal *L'Ordre Nouveau* will henceforth be abbreviated to ON. The articles or manifestos quoted below without an author (published both in ON and in other journals) are attributable to the entire group.

from May 1933 it started publishing the monthly journal *L'Ordre Nouveau*. Published until September 1938 (totalling 48 issues, with a print run that never exceeded two thousand copies), the journal became the favourite place for debate and doctrinal elaboration as well as the movement's tool for dissemination and for revolutionary action. In addition to Marc (alias Michel Glady), Aron, Dandieu and de Rougemont, the group consisted of diverse personalities having different educational and intellectual backgrounds, including the mathematician Claude Chevalley, Maurras's disciple Jean Jardin (alias Dominique Ardouint), the Catholic historian and writer Henri Petiot (alias Daniel-Rops), René Dupuis, Jacques Naville and Gabriel Rey⁴.

The movement's doctrine and political action plan were inspired notably by the works published in the early 1930s by Aron, Dandieu and Daniel-Rops, in which most of the theses and practical proposals that the movement was to elaborate on through the journal, were already outlined⁵. In several papers or programmatic manifestos published even before the journal's founding, ON members defined themselves as «a group of non-conformist and revolutionary spirits»⁶ understanding revolution as the only possible solution to the crisis of the Western World and the only concrete response to the metaphysical concerns of the younger generation which had just come out from a war, but ready to jump into a new one. Likewise, they proclaimed themselves «anti-capitalists but not

⁴ On the history and political doctrine of *Ordre Nouveau*, in addition to the texts on A. Marc cited above, see E. Lipiansky, B. Rettenbach, *Ordre et démocratie, deux sociétés de pensée: De l'Ordre Nouveau au Club Jean-Moulin*, P.U.F., Paris 1967, pp. 1-103; J.-L. Loubet Del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années Trente*, cit., pp. 79-120; P. Balman, *Intellectuel(s) dans L'Ordre nouveau (1933-1938): une aristocratie de prophètes*, in D. Bonnaud-Lamotte, J.-L. Rispail (sous la dir.), *Intellectuel(s) des années trente: Entre le rêve et l'action*, Éditions du CNRS, Paris 1989, pp. 171-184; P. Andreu, *Révoltes de l'esprit: Les revues des années 30*, Kimé, Paris 1991, pp. 37-51; M. Heim, *Actualité de «L'Ordre Nouveau»*, in *L'Ordre Nouveau*, réédition par les soins de la Fondation Émile Chanoux, 5 voll., Fondation Émile Chanoux, Aoste 1997, vol. *, pp. 15-143; H.-W. Eckert, *Konservative Revolution in Frankreich? Die Nonkonformisten der Jeune Droite und des Ordre Nouveau in der Krise der 30er Jahre*, Oldenbourg, München 2000; J. Jacob, *Le retour de «L'Ordre Nouveau». Les métamorphoses d'un fédéralisme européen*, Droz, Genève 2000; O. Dard, *Le Rendez-vous manqué des relèves des années 30*, P.U.F., Paris 2002; P. Troude-Chastenot, *La critique de la démocratie dans les écrits personnalistes des années 1930: Esprit et Ordre nouveau*, in «Cités», XVI/2003-2004, pp. 161-176; D. Mosseri, *Actualité de «L'Ordre Nouveau»*, in «Metabasis», 14/2012, pp. 1-15; Ch. Roy, *La réflexion fédéraliste sur la liberté dans la revue personnaliste L'Ordre Nouveau et le contexte français des années 1930*, in «L'Europe en Formation», 381/2016, pp. 55-63.

⁵ These are, in particular, four books co-written by Aron and Dandieu (*Décadence de la nation française*, 1931; *Le Cancer américain*, 1931; *La Révolution nécessaire*, 1933; *Dictature de la liberté*, 1935), and two books published in 1932 by Daniel-Rops (*Le monde sans âme* and *Les Années tournantes*), who also published *Éléments de notre destin* in 1933, which is a kind of compendium with the purpose of promoting and disseminating ON's doctrine.

⁶ *Précisions sur l'Ordre Nouveau*, in «Plans», 10/1931, p. 153.

Marxists», «socialists but not materialists», «patriots but not nationalists, Europeans but not pacifists [...]. Neither individualists nor collectivists [but] personalists»⁷.

As a result of teamwork (the journal articles were indeed very often jointly discussed and planned, and signed by two authors), the ON doctrine had been drawn up starting out from a critical analysis of the crisis affecting France and the whole of Europe in the early 1930s, looking for its real roots and nature, beyond its economic, social and political expressions. ON members were convinced that this crisis was rooted in that rationalist and positivist ground on which stands the civilization of technics and progress. The crisis was, then, to be considered the outcome of a moral and spiritual disease turning into a «crisis of conscience»⁸ of Western society. Western man, states one of the ON members, has lost contact with himself, that is with the concrete man, and «anything that is not based on the reality of man acts to the detriment of his humanity»⁹. Thus, rationalism, idealism and abstraction have resulted in the dehumanization of man, who now finds himself without defence, at the mercy of the new gods who deny, hurt or dominate him, such as money, the market, race, class or the state. Criticism of rationalism and materialism and of their economic, political and moral embodiment, is thus the starting point of ON's doctrine. They are the leading sources of what the group used to call the «established disorder» (*le désordre établi*) to portray the global crisis in French and European society. The social atomism and the spiritual void pervading these last provide the ground on which nationalism and totalitarian ideologies flourish: «fascism, bolshevism, hitlerism, americanism [...] originated from our deficiencies, arose from the weakening of the spirit of the West»¹⁰. Thus, faced with «a society that denies the Spirit, destroys morality, sacrifices man»¹¹, ON claimed the «primacy of the spiritual», that is the primacy of «what is most human in man»¹² and, in opposition to liberal or marxist materialism, to statism and to Maurras's motto *politique d'abord*, ON embraced the watchword «*spirituel d'abord, économique ensuite, politique à leur service*»¹³.

⁷ *Manifeste de l'Ordre nouveau*, in «Plans», 9/1931, pp. 149-150.

⁸ R. Aron, A. Dandieu, *Le cancer américain*, Riéder, Paris 1931, p. 15.

⁹ D. de Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, Je Sers, Paris 1934, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Mission ou démission de la France*, in «ON», 1/1933, p. 3.

¹¹ *Nous voulons*, in «ON», 9/1934, p. 2.

¹² Daniel-Rops, D. de Rougemont, *Spirituel d'abord*, in «ON», 3/1933, p. 13.

¹³ *Manifeste de l'Ordre nouveau*, cit., p. 150.

2. The Revolution and the New Order

These statements of principle are followed by the proposal of a new spiritual, political and economic order based on a new hierarchy of values and a new conception of man and the world. The transition from the *established disorder* to the *new order* will not be the outcome of a violent revolt, nor of a series of partial reforms, but of a revolution, in the authentic sense of the term: «The revolt that denies and destroys, the reform that resigns and accepts, are equally misleading; they do not address the spiritual roots of the current crisis, they do not reach man. The Revolution, on the contrary, is neither conservative nor destructive, but creatrix»¹⁴. ON's belief is that action must be taken on the deeper causes of the crisis and that, faced with the global dimension it has reached, a «total change of plan»¹⁵ is needed. Revolution should therefore aim neither at the conquest of material power, nor at the overthrow of economic structures or at the establishment of a new regime through violence. Rather, it will be primarily a «psychological»¹⁶ revolution, as its ambition is to achieve a new mental and existential order, which has to be built starting from a new ontology based on the notion of the person and a new methodology breaking with positivist rationalism. Therefore, far from aiming at the conquest of state power, ON's revolution stands *against* the state itself, and aims to change the very essence of power. In this respect, ON blames what it calls the «established revolutions» against capitalist disorder (the Soviet, Fascist and Nazi revolutions). Although founded on different principles and methods, these revolutions all led to the same tragic result and, instead of liberating man, enslaved him¹⁷. These are therefore failed revolutions, which is to say «betrayals, comic or tragic caricatures of the authentic revolution»¹⁸. In order to avoid such degeneration and not neglect the constructive

¹⁴ A. Marc, *Ni révolte, ni réforme: Révolution française*, in «ON», 3/1933, p. 22; see also R. Aron, *Réforme ou révolution*, in «ON», 17/1935, pp. 16-17 and Id., *La peur de la révolution*, in «ON», 43/1938, p. III.

¹⁵ *Nous voulons*, cit., pp. 1-32, *passim*.

¹⁶ *Précisions sur l'Ordre Nouveau*, cit., p. 154.

¹⁷ Cf. A. Dandieu, D. de Rougemont *et al.*, *Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau*, in «La Revue des vivants», 12/1933, p. 1821; A. Marc, *Ni révolte ni réforme: Révolution française*, cit., p. 19; A. Dandieu, *Guerre et révolution*, in «ON», 26/1935, p. 15.

¹⁸ Daniel-Rops, *Vers un ordre nouveau*, in «L'Avant-Poste», février 1934, p. 6.

impetus that must belong to every authentic revolution, a link between theory and praxis needs to be maintained: «our doctrine», ON states, will have to «materialise in facts and incarnate in people»¹⁹. The «new French Revolution» envisaged by ON, is thus first and foremost a *personal* revolution, as it intends to involve the individual person, in the depths of its being, starting with the members of the movement themselves, who intend to be its initiators: «To be with us, one must first of all [...] have carried out, within oneself, in the secret of one's heart, THE TOTAL REVOLUTION»²⁰. Revolutionary action is then conceived as a personal commitment and act, requiring a responsibility on the part of the individual: «there is no revolution without responsibility», and this responsibility «can only be assumed by persons in action»²¹. ON's political theory is founded on the idea of the revolutionary nature of the human person, which is not reducible to every determination and every ideology that attempts to enslave it. While the individual lives at the mercy of History or the masses, «in expectation, revolt and impotence»²², the person, on the contrary, decides, acts, risks: it «is not a state but an ACT. Man becomes a person insofar as he manifests himself *concretely*, in a manner that is *particular* to him, in a task that is *his own* and for which he is *responsible*»²³. Therefore, ON rejects the determinism of individualist or collectivist ideologies and wishes for the rise of a new man, who «again becomes responsible for his own special destiny»²⁴. The faith in History or in the collective destinies of the masses, must give way to the personal destiny and vocation of each man, which consists in committing oneself to the responsibilities and duties that such a vocation poses: «Revolution is not [...] the result of an economic and social determinism. It is, *first and foremost*, the act that creates new determinations [...], the act that frees»²⁵.

¹⁹ R. Aron, *Esquisses d'une méthode d'action révolutionnaire*, in «ON», 20/1935, p. 17. See also R. Dupuis, *Autour du mot "révolution"*, in «ON», 41/1937, pp. 1-10. ON devotes two issues of the journal (n° 3 and n° 41) to the topic of revolution.

²⁰ *Comment est né l'Ordre nouveau*, in «ON», 9/1934, p. 3 of the cover.

²¹ C. Chevalley, *Sur l'idée de responsabilité*, in «ON», 17/1935, pp. 6-7.

²² D. de Rougemont, *Destin du siècle ou destin de l'homme*, in «ON», 11/1934, p. 6.

²³ Id., *Communauté révolutionnaire*, in «ON», 8/1934, p. 17.

²⁴ Id., *Destin du siècle ou destin de l'homme*, cit., p. 3.

²⁵ Daniel-Rops, D. de Rougemont, *Spirituel d'abord*, cit., p. 13. See also A. Marc, *Un destin? – ton destin!*, in «ON», 11/1934, pp. 27-31.

Besides being *personal*, ON's revolution is also a *personalist* revolution, since it is philosophically founded on the primacy of the human person and aimed at its emergence and defence. Philosophical and moral personalism, which stands at the very heart of ON's revolutionary doctrine, fights «both the abstract individualism of the liberals and any doctrine that places the state [...] as the supreme value»²⁶. As well, ON aims to overcome both the monistic and the totalitarian conception of man. While the former corresponds to the citizen-individual, the manufacturer-individual or the consumer-individual, the latter is conceived as an element of a monolithic whole. ON discloses a causal relationship between the two conceptions, claiming that the rise of the 20th-century masses is the culmination of 19th-century individualism, which conceives society as an abstract aggregate of men who are themselves abstract and identical. The abstract notion of individual and the «integrated» man (that is the man melted into the mass, the class or the race), should then be replaced by the «integral»²⁷ man, that is the person, meaning the concrete, acting and responsible man: «the real man, flesh and spirit, heart and intelligence. [...] the total man [whose] vocation binds him to the permanent elements of social life»²⁸. ON's conception of the person is thus agonistic and dialectical, since in its view the person is both private and social, free but responsible for his destiny, that is, conscious of his personal vocation, which is rooted in earthly and carnal reality, and is realised solely in his communitarian dimension. The person is for ON the supreme value of every society, that must rise above all material and economic values, but also above the state and its institutions. Since it is the concrete manifestation of the *primacy of the spiritual*²⁹, it is thus «the authentic social cell»³⁰, which must be placed at the centre of every revolutionary act and at the basis of the consequent new social and spiritual order.

3. Against the state, against parties and democracy: the new European order

ON's theoretical effort is aimed at transferring philosophical personalism to the level of social organization and public life through the creation of new economic and political institutions that are

²⁶ *Précisions sur l'Ordre Nouveau*, cit., p. 154.

²⁷ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *L'être qui dit non...*, in «ON», 38/1937, p. 50.

²⁸ *Nous voulons*, cit., pp. 7-10.

²⁹ Cf. D. De Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, cit., p. 64: «The primacy of the spiritual means in practice the primacy of the person».

³⁰ Id., *Communauté révolutionnaire*, cit., p. 17.

expected to be «at the service of the human person»³¹. Starting from the person as a social being belonging to groups or communities of different sizes and natures (local, regional, cultural, economic, professional, spiritual...), the group envisions a new order in which the centre of authority does not lie «in the headquarters of the state, but [...] in the real activity of each person, within groups so much stronger the less extensive they are»³². Personalist philosophy thus leads ON members to a radical questioning of the founding political categories of national statehood, contrasting the latter with an “integral” or “global” federalism, i.e. including the political, cultural and economic sphere. While economic federalism stands as a break with (private or state) capitalism, political federalism is the tool that will lead to the overcoming of the nation-state. The sovereign, one and indivisible state («without capital letters»³³) represents for ON the most obvious embodiment of the *established disorder* in the political sphere, since it is the natural outcome of philosophical and political individualism and of an abstract notion of man, thought of as an isolated being, without roots and responsibility. In ON’s view, the state was established and strengthened by exploiting the weakness of community ties. Under the pretext of protection it has monopolised and centralised every relationship and social function. The aim, more or less tacit, of the state is thus to replace society and level diversity by absorbing intermediate groups and communities, with the result of oppressing above all the concrete man, in flesh and blood, namely the person³⁴. Such a project, argues ON, is based on a distorted hypostatisation of the individual that denies man in his integrity. Indeed, the individual is a purely abstract category, a theoretical being that «does not exist and never existed», except «in the imagination of philosophers»³⁵.

Hence, ON fights statism in its centralist, uniformizing and Jacobin declination, and considers that the fundamental question of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity cannot be addressed within the framework of the nation-state³⁶. Understood as the result of the historical convergence of statism and nationalism, the nation-state is a central concept in the analysis of ON, which stigmatizes the

³¹ *Nous voulons*, cit., pp. 11-24.

³² D. de Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, cit., p. 58.

³³ Cf. A. Marc, *L'état sans majuscule*, in «ON», 14/1934, pp. 29-32.

³⁴ Cf. Daniel-Rops, *L'État contre l'homme*, in «ON», 1/1933, pp. 5-9.

³⁵ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l'homme: la commune*, in «ON», 39/1937, pp. 30-31.

³⁶ Cf. for exemple R. Dupuis, P. Prévost, *L'État contre les patries: L'Alsace*, in «ON», 27/1936, pp. 16-38.

confusion between state and nation and between the latter and nationalism. The nation represents thus, for the movement, «a *community of culture*», a «spiritual fact» that, like the fatherland (which is a «sentimental fact» representing the regional community in which one is rooted), cannot have rigid frontiers³⁷. On the contrary, the nation is «a concrete incarnation of the universal»³⁸ and must therefore be decoupled from the state, which in turn should be entrusted only with territorial functions as such (national security, etc.). A similar distinction must be made between national feeling (genuine devotion to the nation) and nationalism: «the great mistake of nationalists consists in conceiving the nation as a closed society based on a patriotic feeling, in which they would like to enclose forever the spiritual life of man. [...] The confusion between the fatherland and the nation leads therefore to identify them with the state, that is to concentrate the existence of the nation in the economic and administrative machine that should only be its support»³⁹. ON thus understands the nation-state as the final result of the confusion between the fatherland and the nation, and between the latter and the state, what makes it the repository of the worst vices: the centralization and bureaucratization of administrative functions; the claim to manage every field of citizens' lives; the marginalization or suppression of linguistic, cultural and customary diversities in the name of the principle of equality. Given its monopoly over the identity and loyalty of its citizens, the nation-state is the main cause of man's «displacement» and «impoverishment»: «Man is not suited for those immense political conglomerations that we try to make him feel as “his fatherland”: they are [...] too big if one tries to make them the place of that direct contact with the flesh and the earth that is necessary to man», but they are at the same time «too small if we claim to limit his spiritual horizon to the frontiers of the nation-state»⁴⁰.

Criticism of the nation-state is as central to as it is radical in ON's doctrine and involves as well the tools and institutions it has adopted to dominate and perpetuate itself, such as parliamentarianism and political parties. This is illustrated by the many pleas made by ON not to vote or by the criticism of universal suffrage. According to the movement, this latter hides the misleading claim to deal with

³⁷ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l'homme: la commune*, cit., p. 34.

³⁸ A. Marc, *Tradition renouée*, in «ON», 8/1934, p. 2.

³⁹ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l'homme: la commune*, cit., p. 34.

⁴⁰ M. Gladly (pseud. A. Marc), *À hauteur d'homme (Des frontières au fédéralisme)*, in «ON», 15/1934, pp. 8-9.

human problems in quantitative terms and the illusory promise to citizens of participation in political power⁴¹. ON claims therefore to be «against the parties, and aims to break them down»⁴², thus provoking the resentment of all contemporary French parties, from the *Action française* to the Communists. Moreover, the group claims its estrangement from every ideological and parliamentary camp: «neither right, nor left, but, if we must absolutely position ourselves in parliamentary terms, [...] we set ourselves halfway between the extreme right and the extreme left, behind the president, turning our back on the assembly»⁴³. While recognizing the genuineness of grassroots political activism, the real targets of ON's criticism are the party as an institution and the party officials: regardless of its values and programmes, «it is the party itself, as a *tool*, that is criminal»⁴⁴, since in order to reach its real goal, that is the conquest of state power, it systematically betrays its doctrine, thus revealing its real nature: «the party does not exist but in function of the state; it is the projection of statism in the “public” life of society. It is therefore necessarily abstract, oppressive, centralizing»⁴⁵.

The critique of the party system invests what ON considers to be its smokescreen, namely representative democracy as the embodiment of political liberalism, which, states the group, «generally leads to dictatorship»⁴⁶. In the wake of well-known precursors (Marx, Proudhon, Nietzsche, Maurras, Sorel), ON displays a radical aversion to the «parliamentary and pseudo-democratic illusions»⁴⁷ of liberal democracies, which it blames for humiliating the people and for spreading centralism and statist tyranny under the cloak of liberalism. Far from being the seat of representation of the people's interests, parliament is thus, for the movement, the place where those interests are systematically betrayed, since the real concern of the members of parliament is the

⁴¹ Cf. for exemple D. Ardouint (*pseud.* J. Jardin), X. de Lignac, *Ne votez pas*, in «ON», 30/1936, pp. 1-7.

⁴² D. Ardouint (*pseud.* J. Jardin), Daniel-Rops, *Les forces intactes de la France*, in «ON», 14/1934, p. 7.

⁴³ R. Aron, A. Dandieu, *La révolution nécessaire*, Grasset, Paris 1933, p. XII. See also n° 4, 1933 of «ON» entitled *Ni droite, ni gauche*.

⁴⁴ D. de Rougemont, *Qu'est-ce que la politique*, in «ON», 32/1936, p. 2, n. 1.

⁴⁵ C. Chevalley, M. Glady (*pseud.* A. Marc), *La mort des partis*, in «ON», 4/1933, p. 20.

⁴⁶ *Du parlementarisme*, in «ON», 30/1936, p. 1.

⁴⁷ A. Marc, *Chronique de la troisième force. Vers un ordre nouveau*, in «Esprit», 2/1932, pp. 330-334.

preservation of their own position and privileges⁴⁸. ON was not the only political movement fighting parliamentary democracy in France at the time. Nevertheless, it does not embrace the theses of fascist and communist anti-parliamentarism, as they represent, in its view, a false solution: «the alternative of the 20th century is not fascism or communism; they are but two variants of the same centralized structure. The urgent alternative is another: totalitarian State or free Federalism»⁴⁹. Genuine democracy can therefore only be federal and can be constituted only apart from the nation-state, namely within a communalist federalism whose model of reference the Swiss Rougemont finds in the *Landsgemeinde* (plenary assembly of voters) existing in the cantons and municipalities of his own country, and which represents a unique example of government of the people, by the people, for the people (as Abraham Lincoln defined democracy in the famous Gettysburg Address of November 19, 1863)⁵⁰. ON thus identifies in federalism the only lifeline for democracies that really wish to be authentic and which therefore cannot be confused «either with parliamentarism or with any of the existing centralized regimes, which differ simply in the way in which the delegation of authority by the people to an Assembly, a party or a man is carried out»⁵¹.

Finally, the international dimension of the nation-state is also questioned by ON. Against the international order based on the anarchy of relations between states, it envisages a new supranational order for Europe based on the overcoming of them. The group considers that the problem of nationalities cannot be solved on the basis of the abstract principle whereby every nationality must have its own state, that is, the principle on which Europe settled after the First World War and the end of empires. ON points out the dangers and contradictions of this criterion, and believes that the only possible solution can be found on the level of an «authentic federalism»⁵² within the European context, and freed from the logic of the nation-state: «from the frontiers of Hungary to the Danzig

⁴⁸ Cf. R. Aron, *Le Parlement contre l'esprit*, in «ON», 4/1933, pp. 15-18; D. de Rougemont, J. Jardin, *Les parlementaires contre le Parlement*, in «ON», 4/1933, pp. 7-9; M. Glady (pseud. A. Marc), *Pensées simples sur le parlementarisme*, in «ON», 30/1936, pp. 8-14.

⁴⁹ *Pour la liberté*, in «ON», 34/1936, p. 11.

⁵⁰ Cf. D. de Rougemont, *Plébiscite et démocratie*, in «ON», 30/1936, p. 25.

⁵¹ *Précis Ordre Nouveau*, in «ON», 22-23/1935, p. 61. On ON's critique of parliamentary democracy see P. Troude-Chastenet, *La critique de la démocratie dans les écrits personnalistes des années 1930*: *Esprit et Ordre nouveau*, cit., pp. 161-176.

⁵² Cf. R. Dupuis, *Politique de l'état ou politique de la nation?*, in «ON», 21/1935, pp. 7-12.

Corridor, wherever national minorities are stirred up within the oppressive and rigid framework of nation-states, Europe is stuffed with the seeds of war that only a humane and flexible conception of federalism is capable of avoiding»⁵³. Hence the movement's opposition to any project of union or even cooperation between the European nation-states, be it Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-Europe (1923), the Briand project (1930) or the League of Nations (founded in 1919): as long as they continue to claim their absolute independence and sovereignty, nation-states, asserts ON, «are faced with a ceaseless rivalry [...], there is only one form of genuine and effective "rapprochement" between nation-states: war»⁵⁴. In its view, even when the centralised nation-state declares itself pacifist, it cannot but be imperialist on the outside, making war inescapable. The Second World War will validate the analysis done in the early 1930s by the ON scholars, according to which the only way to prevent a war that they saw as imminent was to «resolutely exit autarkies and cosmopolitanism, imperialism and internationalism»⁵⁵. Since the antagonistic, warlike and imperialistic essence of nation-states makes any form of federation between them impossible, the first step to be taken in view of the new European federation is that of their deconstruction, that is of a preliminary federalist revolution within the European states themselves: only federalist societies can be federated⁵⁶.

The new European order will thus have to be built on the basis of a political and administrative decentralisation founded on a territorial and cultural regionalism allowing «the release of all the profoundly patriotic feelings through which the [...] human relationship with the land, the race and the sentimental and cultural tradition is manifested»⁵⁷. Against «every type of statism, be it of Moscow or Rome, Berlin or Washington»⁵⁸, the movement advocates the overcoming of European states in a twofold direction: a greater autonomy at the regional and communal level, and a union on a European scale: «in the political sphere, we demand a regionalist organisation of Europe. This

⁵³ *Le Fédéralisme contre la guerre*, in «ON», 15/1934, p. 2 of the cover.

⁵⁴ M. Gladys (pseud. A. Marc), *À hauteur d'homme*, cit., 1934, p. 13. Significant is the description of the SDN, which «is not a League of Nations, but rather a League of States. [...] if we wanted to make it an instrument of peace, we would have to start by making it disappear» (A. Marc, *Meriter la paix*, in «ON», 33/1936, p. 31).

⁵⁵ *Par-dessus les frontières*, in «ON», 15/1934, p. 2.

⁵⁶ On the idea of a European federation and the forerunner project of a European common market see e.g. R. Dupuis, *Salut de l'Europe*, in «ON», 15/1934, pp. 23-32 and R. Aron, *Solidarité européenne*, in «ON», 15/1934, pp. 3-7.

⁵⁷ *Précisions sur l'Ordre Nouveau*, cit., p. 154.

⁵⁸ *Nous voulons*, cit., p. 4.

presupposes the abolition of the national framework [...] and of the administrative, political, financial and military centre in which the country's energies are congested. We want to re-establish on the political level the creative tension between the small decentralised fatherland on the one hand and universalism coming directly from the persons on the other»⁵⁹.

4. Communalist, pluralist and integral federalism

Although it has similarities with the classical conceptions of federalism, ON's federalism displays some unique features, both in terms of its institutions, which are quite different from those existing at the time in federations such as Switzerland or the United States, and in its theoretical framework, which shows a certain degree of superficiality as to its philosophical foundations, except for a vague reference to Proudhon's federalist theory. More particularly, whether the young Non-conformists of ON show an evident (but not made explicit) dislike for Kant's cosmopolitan federalism, and an equally evident (also not made explicit) closeness to Althusius's (proto-)federalism, actually a consistent federalist theory is practically absent from their studies. Moreover, even the reference they claimed to the French communalist and Proudhonian tradition is confined (with the sole exception of Dandieu, who however died in 1933) to a superficial and second-hand knowledge of the works of Proudhon (who, likewise, belongs to a non-personalist tradition), notably the federalist theory developed by the French philosopher some seventy years earlier in *Du principe fédératif* (1863)⁶⁰. It must be said that the theoretical weakness of ON's federalism can be traced back to a declared revulsion of its members towards any artificial and abstract system, but it is compensated for by a well-developed "theory of

⁵⁹ A. Dandieu, D. de Rougemont *et al.*, *Positions d'attaque pour l'Ordre Nouveau*, cit., pp. 1824-1825.

⁶⁰ As J.-L. Loubet del Bayle (*Les non-conformistes des années Trente*, cit., p. 85) states, among the ON's members Dandieu was the only one who was familiar with Proudhon's work, which he also owned in its original edition, while the others knew it mainly through Georges Gurvitch's *L'idée du droit social* (1932). However, as noted by B. Voyenne (*Proudhon et Sorel dans l'Ordre nouveau (1930-1937)*, in «Mil neuf cent», X/1992, pp. 79-80), although in Dandieu's works one smells an undoubted «Proudhonian "perfume"», references to the theorist of federalism are rather occasional. Voyenne himself confirms that Alexandre Marc «at the time had read practically nothing of Proudhon» (*ivi*, p. 80): he knew him indirectly and superficially, but admired him, as confirmed by a review in one of the last issues of ON, where, on behalf of the group, he writes that even if they are not Proudhon's disciples, «we feel spontaneously close to him» («ON», 41/1937, p. 60). Ultimately, the references to Proudhon are decidedly few (about ten in all), and this is also due to a precise editorial choice of the journal, aimed at avoiding an overly erudite approach burdened with quotations, and to deliver to the public accessible volumes of few pages, containing analyses of current events and concrete proposals. In particular, it is surprising that there is no reference to the French philosopher in the issue dedicated to property (n° 16), and only one quotation in the issue dedicated to federalism (n° 15). On the relations of *Ordre Nouveau* with Proudhonian federalism, see also the chapter entitled *Personnalisme et fédéralisme* in B. Voyenne, *Histoire de l'idée fédéraliste*, Presses d'Europe, Paris 1981, pp. 158-193.

action”, which results in a revolutionary tactic aimed at provoking the emergence of small, autonomous and diverse groups, destined not to seize power at the top of the state, but to develop in their respective spheres of action the new structures of the *new order society*, i.e. to apply general principles in specialised spheres. In particular, ON envisages the creation of local, professional, agricultural or other cells (that will actually be created in various French cities) as embryos of the future basic communities of the federal order (municipalities, enterprises, etc.) and with the task of building this order from below, through their gradual federation, also flanked by spiritual bodies («New Order cells») more specifically doctrinal, headed by a «spiritual vigilance committee» charged with overseeing the purity of revolutionary doctrine.

The originality of ON’s federalism lies in the fact that it is communalist, pluralist and integral: it starts from the basic human groups (the commune, but also companies and cultural or spiritual groups); it provides for federation among them according to a non-hierarchical order, but functional to their nature; it invests all spheres of society, in particular the political and economic spheres. At the different levels in which the new federal order is to be articulated, will belong various functions and institutions, which will maintain relations with each other based on the principles of autonomy, cooperation and horizontal and vertical subsidiarity. In the political sphere, the commune is for ON the «authentic “social cell”»⁶¹ of public life and the basic federative element. Founded on the human and natural ties of neighbourhood, it is the physical and spiritual place where man enters into a relationship with the world and «with the *other*, which is a metaphysical enigma, but also the elementary evidence of everyday life»⁶². The commune does not necessarily coincide with the administrative municipality, but since it constitutes the optimal dimension in which democracy (understood as direct and immediate participation) can be authentically exercised, it must become an actual centre of local self-government. Its functions will be both administrative (municipal budget, infrastructures, local customs, education, civil authority, resolution of local disputes) and governmental⁶³. Among the latter, the fundamental one concerns the power to join or found federations of communes. Indeed, far from being a closed entity, the commune cooperates with other

⁶¹ M. Gladly (*pseud.* A. Marc), *À hauteur d’homme*, cit., p. 9.

⁶² A. Marc, *Patrie, nation, état*, in «ON», 32/1936, p. 32. Cf. also C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l’homme: la commune*, cit., p. 36.

⁶³ Cf. *Précis Ordre Nouveau*, in «ON», 34/1936, p. 21.

communes in a regional dimension, and is therefore open to the universal, being able to be part of several regions at the same time⁶⁴.

At the second level of the new order's political organisation is the fatherland (or region, a term less frequently used in ON's writings). Land of the fathers, it expresses for ON the contact of a sentimental and «carnal nature»⁶⁵ between man and the environment in which he lives. It is the place of «our consciousness» and «our affective life»⁶⁶, and even if its sizing is regional (ON speaks of an Alsatian, Breton, Catalan... and more generally of a regional fatherland), the commune remains the privileged place where attachment to it is manifested⁶⁷. Like the commune, moreover, the regional fatherland does not coincide with administrative regions, and is not a closed entity. If the commune is open to other communes and to the fatherland, the latter is open to a broader dimension that is the nation, with which it should not be confused. ON rejects the idea of a region conceived as a miniature nation-state, as well as the idea of a rigid regionalism, that is, a transposition of nationalism on a regional scale. Such a type of regionalism, the movement states, «would be the opposite of the regime of freedom we want. It would tend towards particularism and parochialism, whereas genuine federalism tends towards the universal» and furthermore «does not start from the region or the province, but from the commune»⁶⁸, which is in turn a federation of persons.

The fatherland and the nation thus belong to two different planes of human reality, but they do not exclude or oppose each other. Rather, they complement each other: «the nation “opens” the fatherlands: the national vocation prevents the latter from falling into the stagnation of a horizonless provincialism [...]. Between the patriotic and national poles there is a phenomenon of [...] fruitful and necessary *tension*»⁶⁹. In its turn, the nation coincides neither with the state as an administrative tool nor with race as understood by the Nazis. The nation, ON states, «lies first and foremost on the

⁶⁴ Cf. M. Glady (*pseud.* A. Marc), *À hauteur d'homme*, cit., p. 10: «a commune can freely be part of the Rhine economic region, the Alsatian fatherland and the French nation».

⁶⁵ *Lettre à Adolf Hitler. Chancelier du Reich*, in «ON», 5/1933, p. 21.

⁶⁶ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l'homme: la commune*, cit., p. 32.

⁶⁷ Cf. *ivi*, p. 33.

⁶⁸ *Précis Ordre Nouveau*, in «ON», 34/1936, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁹ A. Marc, *Patrie, nation, état*, cit., p. 36-37.

spiritual plane»⁷⁰ and is «a historical tradition and a bond of culture [that] corresponds to the spiritual factors common to different regional fatherlands: in it is embodied [...] the spirit of universality that reigns over particular lands»⁷¹. The error of nationalism consists instead in conceiving the nation as a closed society, founded on a patriotic sentiment that precludes any opening towards the universal, and which materialises in the confusion between fatherland, nation and state, that is to say in the nation-state, in which the existence of the nation is concentrated «in the economic-administrative mechanism that should be no more than its support»⁷².

ON ultimately establishes a radical distinction between the above-described different organisms of society and the state. While rejecting the idea of the *one and indivisible* state, the movement does not deny the importance of a central (federal) power and rejects all forms of anarchism: «the notion of man that inspires anarchists is a chimera: all societies and communities imply an irreducible element: constraint»⁷³. Since it is an expression of the power, constraint must be assumed by the federal state in order to guarantee and preserve the cohesion of the whole and avoid the catastrophic outcomes of conflict: without the state «human groups would succumb to fragmentation and disorder», and although the state represents a threat to the autonomy and independence of such groups and to the freedom of individuals, it is «a *lesser evil*» that must be thought of as a «simple instrument at the service of societies», and subordinated «to the primacy of communities, that is to say [...] to the primacy of the human person»⁷⁴. Thus, «a sufficiently rigid order is needed to prevent the dangers of anarchy», but since the state has a natural vocation to become totalitarian, «a sufficiently elastic order is also needed to prevent the equally strong danger of statism and dictatorship»⁷⁵. The state of the new order will therefore have limited functions. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, its powers will concern the guarantee, coordination and harmonisation of local and professional powers in material, administrative and moral terms⁷⁶. Its power of constraint will not be uncontrolled, nor

⁷⁰ *Lettre à Adolf Hitler*, cit., p. 21.

⁷¹ *Définitions*, in «ON», 9/1934, p. II.

⁷² C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *À la taille de l'homme: la commune*, cit., p. 33.

⁷³ A. Marc, *L'état sans majuscule*, cit., p. 30.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, p. 31.

⁷⁵ *Pour la liberté*, cit., p. 9; Cf. also R. Dupuis, P. Prévost, *L'Etat contre les patries: L'Alsace*, cit., p. 27.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Précis ordre nouveau*, in «ON», 22/1935, p. 62; *Précis Ordre Nouveau*, in «ON», 34/1936, pp. 25-26.

will it be sovereign. The state will then guarantee security, justice and equity, but it will be strong «insofar as it is kept within the legitimate limits of its competence». To this end, it will be «subject to the careful control of the spiritual cells and primarily of the Supreme Council [which] will enjoy the fullness of *authority*, without, however, directly disposing of unconditional constraint»⁷⁷, that is to say power. The organisational structure of the ON's federation is thus based on the distinction between *power*, which belongs to the state, and *authority*, which is superior to it and which, as we shall see, is embodied in a Supreme Council.

Concerning ON's economic doctrine, this is founded on a new type of company, the corporation (no reference to medieval corporations or fascist or soviet corporatism), which will be the basic cell of economic and labour relations. Corporations are described as «free companies», «directed by those who make them up» and «local», which implies a real and «effective participation» of their members. They are not only economic or professional communities, but also centres «of human solidarity»⁷⁸, conceived around the real aim of ON, that is the abolition of the proletarian condition. This latter is based in turn on wage employment and unqualified labour, which will also be abolished in the corporative system⁷⁹. To this end, ON proposes two further measures: a minimum subsistence income allowing everyone to satisfy their basic needs and thus providing minimum material security, and civil service, which consists of working for free in companies in place of unqualified workers, allowing them to take paid holidays (an experience that ON members themselves arranged in the summer of 1935)⁸⁰. ON's economic organisation is thus clearly designed as an anti-capitalist function. However, unlike Marxism, which emphasises exploitation and class struggle, ON's critique of capitalism emphasises production. For ON, the original fault of capitalism is that it has distorted the primary purpose of the economy (the satisfaction of man's real needs) by replacing it with the

⁷⁷ A. Marc, *L'état sans majuscule*, cit., p. 32.

⁷⁸ *Nous voulons*, cit., pp. 21-22.

⁷⁹ On ON's economic doctrine see e.g. R. Aron, D. Dandieu, *U.S.A.: Faillite économique du libéralisme*, in «ON», 1/1933, pp. 21-24; A. Marc, *Esclavage pas mort...*, in «ON», 25/1935, pp. 7-13; Id., *Echange et Magie*, in «ON», 40/1937, pp. 53-55; R. Dupuis, D. de Rougemont, *Historique du mal capitaliste*, in «ON», 37/1937, pp. 1-13; Daniel-Rops, *Le travail et l'esprit*, in «ON», 7/1934, pp. 7-11; R. Dupuis, *U.R.S.S.: Misère de l'étatisme économique*, in «ON», 1/1933, pp. 29-32; Id., *Le Marxisme contre les Prolétaires*, in «ON», 25/1935, pp. 27-35.

⁸⁰ On the minimum subsistence income and the civil service see Daniel-Rops, *Le travail et l'esprit*, in «ON», 7/1934, pp. 7-11; R. Aron, *Genèse du Service Civil*, in «ON», 7/1934, pp. 12-16; Id., *Solidarité européenne*, in «ON», 15/1934, pp. 3-7; A. Ollivier, *Où nous en sommes?*, in «ON», 24/1935, pp. 21-32; A. Marc, *Condition de tout plan*, in «ON», 22-23/1935, pp. 1-36; Id., *La terre libérée*, in «ON», 6/1933, pp. 25-32.

unlimited pursuit of profit, throwing man into the vicious circle of productivism⁸¹. In its attempt to reduce man to his sole function as consumer or producer, capitalism is thus the manifestation of the *established disorder* in the economic sphere, the main agent of oppression of the human person and the main cause of wars, alongside nationalism. The institutions of the new economic order will thus have to put an end to the proletarianisation of the working class and to unqualified labour, class struggle and productivism, promoting a different kind of production, which must be subordinate to human needs and to the satisfaction of vital needs⁸².

Like the commune in the political sphere, the corporation represents the basic cell of economic life. Moreover, similarly to the commune, the corporation is neither isolated nor self-sufficient, but has a federative disposition, thus being able to give rise to larger economic entities with different functions and powers. ON identifies three of them:

Corporative association is a free association of Corporations whose activities [...] converge and cooperate in the same productive process. [...] the same Corporation may belong to several corporative associations [...]. The *syndicate* groups all the Corporations that produce the same material or manufacture the same product. [...] It is not an *agency of production* [but] of coordination, liaison and transmission. [...] The *professional association* groups the technicians of the same profession. It is a free association whose activity is located somewhat on the margins of the economy.⁸³

Within this framework, the aim of which is to reconcile the need of large organisations for mass production with the need of the person's direct participation in economic activities, the corporations remain fully autonomous. Every worker of the company is a partner in it and owns personally the property, as this latter is personal in nature: «Concrete and personal property is one of the natural foundations of man. The right to property is legitimate only insofar as it is the factor of realisation of

⁸¹ Cf. Daniel-Rops, *Éléments de notre destin*, Spes, Paris 1934, p. 250.

⁸² Cf. *Pour la liberté*, cit., p. 5 and *Précisions sur l'Ordre Nouveau*, cit., p. 154.

⁸³ R. Dupuis, A. Marc, *Corporation*, in «ON», 10/1934, pp. 12-14.

the person»⁸⁴. ON therefore rejects both all anonymous, capitalist, socialist or nationalised forms of ownership of the means of production, and all state control over economic life, while envisaging, alongside corporative (personal) properties, also communal, regional and, in certain cases, federal properties (e.g. mines or large public-interest companies, which in any case will not be controlled by the state)⁸⁵.

5. Authority, power and freedom

Ultimately, the new order designed by ON rests on the principle of an integral federalism built out of the organic cells of social life and in particular the commune and the company, which are the most natural and spontaneous communities. They will be free to self-determine, but also to federate with each other, while preserving their diversity and autonomy. Since the nation-state prevents any of these processes (unless it is according to its rules and solely within its borders), ON believes that only an anti-statist and decentralised society can guarantee real freedom. Nevertheless, this cannot be without responsibility. Within such a solidarity-based federalism, states ON, man can thus enjoy «a space for concrete and responsible activity, a possibility of exercising his rights and duties as a citizen without delegating them to some distant and abstract centre and, finally, a possibility of exercising power *on the spot*, in a context that is on a human scale. It thus protects, at the same time, the immediate *interests* [and] the feeling of autonomy»⁸⁶.

With the aim of taking politics away from the monopoly of the state and giving it back «its spiritual value»⁸⁷, the new federalist society will be founded on the «true “separation of powers”»⁸⁸, that is the separation between the political, economic and administrative spheres, each of which will have executive, legislative and judicial functions. In particular, three bodies are envisaged. Local administration is the responsibility of the Commune and the Corporations, which will have the power to initiate legislation. The political power of the Commune lies in the Communal Council, while there

⁸⁴ R. Gibrat, R. Lousteau, *Comment se posent les problèmes techniques*, in «ON», 7/1934, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Cf. R. Ardouint, A. Marc, *Libération de la propriété*, in «ON», 16/1934, p. 11; E. Hélice, *La propriété corporative*, in «ON», 16/1934, pp. 20-21.

⁸⁶ *Pour la liberté*, cit., p. 12. See on this topic Ch. Roy, *La réflexion fédéraliste sur la liberté dans la revue personnaliste L'Ordre Nouveau et le contexte français des années 1930*, cit., pp. 55-63.

⁸⁷ *Nous voulons*, cit., p. 26.

⁸⁸ A. Marc, *L'état sans majuscule*, cit., p. 32.

is no political body at the level of the region. Therefore, the functions exceeding the local competence or that of the federated communes will be the responsibility of the federation and, in particular, of the Federal Administrative Council and the Federal Economic Council, whose power is comparable to the traditional legislative power in a federal regime: on the proposal of the local bodies, they formulate the framework laws that can be integrated locally. While the members of the Communal Council are partly elected by the inhabitants of the Commune, partly appointed by the Federal Administrative Council and partly chosen by co-optation, the members of the Federal Administrative Council and the Federal Economic Council are partly elected by the Communes and Corporations and partly appointed by the aforementioned Supreme Council. The latter represents the last level and is an appeal and doctrinal supervisory body, guarantor of the «Federal Statute of the Person, tangible expression of the supremacy of the Spiritual»⁸⁹. It would embody the intransigence and purity of the revolutionary doctrine and intervene in all conflicts involving the essential principles and vital needs of the federation⁹⁰. Within the federation, the Federal Administrative Council and the Federal Economic Council embody *power*, whereas The Supreme Council embodies *authority*: it has no direct power and stands outside traditional state institutions, as a kind of an American Supreme Court⁹¹. In particular, it «shall be absolutely distinct from the state», shall have «the role of guarantor of personal liberties against administrative tyrannies» and «shall be oriented towards the creation of the personalist regime»⁹².

The separation between authority and power is the tool designed to concretise ON's key principle, that is the primacy of the spiritual. The movement states indeed an ontological distinction between power and authority: «*authority is not power*. It never coincides with any constituted power, since it is superior to any power. Authority is what enables power, that is subject to it, to be actually *exercised*». And since authority «institutes», while power is «instituted», the latter, «as an institution,

⁸⁹ *Nous voulons*, cit., p. 26.

⁹⁰ *Deux schémas d'organisation* *Ordre Nouveau*, in «ON», 9/1934, p. VII. Cf. also Daniel-Rops, *Pour quelques-uns*, in «ON», 17/1935, pp. 1-4; R. Aron, *Esquisse d'une méthode d'action révolutionnaire*, in «ON», 20/1935, pp. 17-19.

⁹¹ For a parallel analysis between the Supreme Council and the US Supreme Court see E. Hélice, *La Cour Suprême des États-Unis*, in «ON», 31/1936, pp. 23-26.

⁹² C. Chevalley, D. de Rougemont, *L'autorité assure les libertés*, in «ON», 40/1937, p. 46.

is naturally material», while authority «as creator and initiator, is essentially spiritual»⁹³. It is authority, for example, that must support the revolutionary effort against the established power and which, once the latter has been overthrown, must avoid becoming confused with the new power, on pain of its degeneration into authoritarianism, as has often happened in the revolutions of the past: «revolutionaries have too often allowed themselves to be dragged into the task of ensuring the functioning of the administrative organisation of the society they had founded or renewed; they have taken on the burden of power»⁹⁴. As already mentioned, to avoid such degeneration, in the new federal order the tension between power and authority will have to be maintained, entrusting the former to the state and institutionalising the ontological precedence of the latter, which will have to establish itself «outside the state, and probably against it»⁹⁵, as its main task is to oversee the state in order to ensure real freedom. It will be embodied both by the Supreme Council, whose members are such by co-optation and initially will be those who had animated the revolutionary process, and by the Communes and Corporations, the members of their respective councils being partly appointed by the Supreme Council.

6. The permanent revolution, conflict and the dichotomic method

As previously mentioned, the political arrangement conceived by ON represents a general and rather approximate framework. This is actually the result of an intentional decision of the movement, which opts to avoid detailed analysis and technical specialisation, and claims the need for a pragmatic and flexible approach, which merely points to the guiding principles of the *new order society* without foreseeing it in its practical details. Nor does ON intend to develop an abstract model to be dropped into reality. Rather, the movement's doctrinal effort is aimed at posing problems taking into account specific situations and «focuses much more on principles, criteria, “architectural indications” to be respected and employed in practical realisations»⁹⁶. Thus, rather than fleeing «before the concrete»⁹⁷

⁹³ D. de Rougemont, *Qu'est-ce que l'autorité?*, in «ON», 31/1936, pp. 2-3. ON dedicates a monographic issue to this topic (*Autorité et pouvoir*, 31/1936).

⁹⁴ R. Dupuis, *Indications historiques sur les rapports entre Autorité et Pouvoir*, in «ON», 31/1936, p. 15.

⁹⁵ C. Chevalley, D. de Rougemont, *L'autorité assure les libertés*, cit., pp. 45- 46.

⁹⁶ A. Ollivier, *Où nous en sommes*, in «ON», 24/1935, p. 23.

⁹⁷ R. Aron, A. Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française*, Riéder, Paris 1931, p. 43.

and attempting «to eliminate life [...] to ignore the unforeseen and the risk»⁹⁸, as liberalism or Marxism do, ON stresses the importance of a doctrine which respects and promotes the freedom of the concrete man, in flesh and blood, in his creative vocation. Revolutionary thought and action, means and ends, should never be separated: «the first weapon of an authentic revolution, is the doctrine of the order it intends to establish: *in Revolution, Doctrine and tactics are absolutely inseparable*»⁹⁹. Thus, alongside the aforementioned ON's concrete actions, the journal itself becomes a place for continuous discussion and research, committing the movement's members in view of a revolutionary process that must also be permanent: for ON, the only effective revolution is neither immediate nor definitive. Rather, it consists in the «overcoming of conflicts, which should be brought to a new stage through the dichotomic method and maintained through it in a liberating tension»¹⁰⁰. The *new order revolution* is clearly different from the revolutions of the past, both in its method and goals. For ON, revolution is not a state or a definitive point of arrival, nor is its goal the achievement of an ideal society, with no more conflicts. Rather, revolution is a tension, a continuous creation: an uninterrupted process of seeking a balance between antagonisms that will always be precarious, meaning called into question by the conflicts themselves¹⁰¹. The recognition of conflict as an irrepressible, yet fruitful reality of the relationship between the person and the world is the assumption of ON's revolutionary doctrine. Conflict is indeed «the source of all values of the human person»¹⁰², whose nature is itself agonal and tensional, as it is «a continuous creation, which must always defend itself and which always tends to overcome itself», thus being «the seat of permanent conflict»¹⁰³. Furthermore, according to ON conflict has a founding value both on the ontological and gnoseological levels, since the conflictual structure of being grounds the dichotomic character of knowledge («the antinomies of the understanding [*entendement*] are but a consequence of the agonal structure of

⁹⁸ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *L'être qui dit non...*, cit., p. 45.

⁹⁹ D. de Rougemont, *Politique de la personne*, cit., p. 210.

¹⁰⁰ A. Ollivier, *Où nous en sommes*, cit., p. 23.

¹⁰¹ Cf. C. Chevalley, *Révolution permanente*, in «ON», 31/1936, pp. 6-11.

¹⁰² *Ivi*, p. 7.

¹⁰³ R. Aron, A. Dandieu, *La Révolution nécessaire*, cit., p. 208.

being»¹⁰⁴; «Knowledge is aporetic [...] and dichotomic [...] because being is agonal»¹⁰⁵), but also on the doctrinal level. At this level, the refusal and opposition (to the state, to capitalism, to the established disorder...), on which a large part of ON's doctrine is based, are not blind and systematic, since denying is always followed by statement: the new order only arises by opposing, it only wants to destroy in order to build. Hence the wholly original idea of the *new order revolution*, whose action consists in «renewing and strengthening polarity by raising it to a new level. [...] The revolutionary act is *dichotomic* by its very nature; this means that it necessarily leads to a new polarisation, safeguarding the essential conflict between man and society, between the spirit and the group [*le grégaire*], between order and freedom»¹⁰⁶.

Thus, if personalism constitutes the philosophical and ontological basis of ON's integral federalism, the latter finds its methodological foundations in the dichotomic principle, the inspiration for which is avowedly Proudhonian and the structure of which is firmly anti-Hegelian. As an instrument of thought and action, the dichotomic method, which actually was mainly conceived by Dandieu, constitutes one of the most original contributions of ON's political theory¹⁰⁷. In particular, the institutional, political and economic arrangement of the federalist revolution is conceived out of and based on a methodological framework founded on the agonal or dual (but not dualistic) analysis of each situation, problem or concept. This method rejects both monistic simplifications, which tend to disregard polarity and suppress one of the terms of the opposition in favour of the other, thus denying the antinomy, and closed and static dualism, which conceives polarity as an irreducible separation between two opposite poles disregarding each other. Yet, the dichotomic method also rejects the Hegelian dialectic method. While recognising polarity and conflict as foundational categories, the latter resolves them through a synthetic overcoming that suppresses the conflicting poles in favour of a third term, which is no longer susceptible to contradiction¹⁰⁸. Since it removes the antinomy on

¹⁰⁴ C. Chevalley, *De la Méthode dichotomique*, in «ON», 36/1936, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, *L'homme refuse*, in «ON», 38/1937, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ M. Glady (*pseud.* A. Marc), *À hauteur d'homme*, cit., p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. for example A. Dandieu, *Discours contre la Méthode*, in «ON», 14/1934, pp. 1-6.

¹⁰⁸ In this regard A. Marc (*Introduction à un droit nouveau*, in «ON», 20/1935, pp. 30-31) quotes several of Proudhon's works: «from contradiction [...] arise life and movement» (*Théorie de la Propriété*); «synthesis does not really eradicate [...] the thesis and antithesis» (*Création de l'Ordre dans l'humanité*); «antinomy does not vanish; herein lies the fundamental vice of all Hegelian philosophy» (*De la Justice dans la révolution et dans l'Église*); «antinomian terms do

behalf of an Absolute – the Spirit in the philosophical sphere, the (Prussian) State in the political sphere –, the Hegelian dialectic thus also results in a static and closed monism, which ON considers «anti-human, anti-vital»¹⁰⁹. The dichotomic method, on the other hand, does not attempt to overcome conflicts, but rather discerns in them the very source of life, and aims to exalt their antinomic elements so that they can evolve in parallel, one thanks to the other, in a fruitful tension. The «agonal fact» is thus to ON «the driving force of all action and thought», while any political project that aims to deny, ignore or suppress conflict is harmful, because it only makes the latter potentially more destructive: sooner or later it «takes revenge by reappearing in a pathological or perverse form»¹¹⁰. The dichotomic method ultimately leads ON to the rejection of both the idolatry of unity and the radicalisation of duality. Rather, through the dichotomic method, it aims at enhancing the paradoxical coexistence of Unity and Diversity and the fruitfulness of a conflict that is «at once one and multiple. There is no conflict except because of diversity: no tension could exist in a homogeneous or continuous world. But [...] there is no conflict except because of unity: radically separate elements could never even come into contact»¹¹¹. Keeping the conflict alive thus means striving to find the right balance between Unity and Diversity, although aware that such a balance will always be unstable and thus always to be renovated through a permanent revolution whose political application is federalism. Indeed, the most authentic spirit of federalism consists in being a «living expression of the richness and diversity of men», which only in a federal polity shaped by the coexistence of both the autonomy of the parts and the union of the whole, can find a reality «at the service of the liberated nations, each founded on its own spiritual tradition, but all involved with the revolutionary Community»¹¹².

not vanish, in the same way as the opposite poles of an electric battery [...]; not only are they unbreakable, but they are the generating cause of movement, of life, of progress; the issue lies not in finding their fusion, which would be death, but their constantly variable equilibrium» (*Théorie de la Propriété*).

¹⁰⁹ A. Marc, Introduction à un droit nouveau, cit., p. 31.

¹¹⁰ C. Chevalley, A. Marc, Tentation de l'Unité, in «ON», 37/1937, p. 46.

¹¹¹ Ivi, p. 47.

¹¹² Nous voulons, cit., p. 26.

7. France's mission and the European legacy of *Ordre Nouveau*

Finally, when applied to the relationship between authority and freedom, the dichotomic method shows that there is no opposition between them, but a necessary and fruitful tension. In this respect, faced with the political situation in 1930's Europe, where the choice between authoritarian regimes and liberal democracies seems to be the only option, ON believed that France should bear the responsibility of «organising a social state in order to maintain [this tension] [...]: there is no freedom at the top of the human hierarchy of values if there is no discipline at the bottom»¹¹³. Although, according to the ON's non-conformists France is also ruled by the *established disorder*, it remains the only country that can boast of an authentic revolutionary tradition to set against the false revolutions of the time. It would therefore be up to France to initiate the federalist revolution. In particular, far from leading any colonialist, imperialist or cosmopolitical project, France should bear the responsibility of implementing internally and guiding externally a political changeover that neither totalitarian states like Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union, nor insular or isolationist states like Great Britain or the United States of America would be able to lead. By highlighting the revolutionary mission of France, ON is of course not referring to the French centralist and Jacobin tradition, but to the federalist aspects featuring in its past, that is to say the Paris Commune of 1871 (which was also inspired by Proudhonian federalism, but, as ON points out, sank into anarchy precisely because it underestimated the importance of the federal link¹¹⁴), the early stages of the Revolution (quickly stifled by the Jacobin and the Bonapartist dictatorships, which brutally repressed and persecuted the federalists), and the federalist tendencies of the Proudhon-inspired labour movement. Moreover, the ON's plan does not rely on the French state, but rather on the French nation, meaning an entity having a cultural and spiritual dimension which refers to a certain idea of man: that French spirit whose revolutionary tradition is founded on an anti-totalitarian humanism that, from the medieval knight to the citizen of the Revolution, attested the primacy of man, of his freedom and responsibility¹¹⁵.

¹¹³ R. Aron, *Liberté*, in «ON», 8/1934, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Textes de doctrine et d'action*, in «ON», 2/1933, p. 3 of the cover.

¹¹⁵ Cf. A. Dandieu, Préface à l'*Anthologie des philosophes français contemporains*, in «ON», 12/1934, p. 27.

ON's activity ended in September 1938, with the last two issues of the journal containing some previously published articles of Arnaud Dandieu, thus celebrating the inspirational mind behind the movement. None of the movement's proposals will be implemented by any government or supranational institution, nor will its principles be part of the programme of any political party or simply penetrate the French political circles of the time, among which, on the contrary, ON was profoundly isolated. As a matter of fact, this is not surprising, given the firmness with which the movement claimed its extraneousness to the parliamentary and party system in a country – France – where parliamentarianism was deeply rooted, and in a political context – the Third Republic – extremely ideologised and completely subservient to the parties. And given, above all, the movement's hostility to the centralised nation-state, which is exactly the model that France invented and exported to the world. Thus, neither the lucidity of ON's analysis and criticism of the nation-state and its nationalist drifts, nor the pro-European thrust of its federalist project served to affect the European scenario. On the contrary, far from going through the vanishing of the nation-states, Europe would soon be upset by a war that the young non-conformists had repeatedly announced. Nevertheless, it was precisely the European scenario that was to become the ground for renewed commitment for some of the ON members in the post-war period. Alexandre Marc especially would take over the movement's legacy and, together with Robert Aron, would found in 1944 the movement *La Fédération*. This last would in turn be one of the pillars of the *Union européenne des fédéralistes*, founded in 1946 in Paris by Marc himself, bringing together the federalist movements of several European countries, such as the German *Europa-Union*, the British *Federal Union*, the Danish *Een Verden* and the *Movimento federalista europeo* founded in Milan in 1943 by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi. As secretary general of the UEF, Alexandre Marc would also bring the issues of ON's integral federalism to the first UEF Congress, held in Montreux (CH) in August 1947, since the political and economic motions of the Congress feature the doctrinal principles developed by ON more than a decade earlier¹¹⁶.

At the request of Alexandre Marc, another main member of ON, namely Denis de Rougemont, would deliver the inaugural address of the Montreux Congress. In his speech titled *L'attitude fédéraliste* the

¹¹⁶ See on this topic J.-P. Gouzy, *Le fédéralisme d'Alexandre Marc et le combat pour l'Europe*, in «L'Europe en Formation», 355/2010, pp. 13-32.

Swiss philosopher would describe the philosophical and spiritual principles of federalism by referring to ON's theses and presenting Swiss federalism as a model for a future European federation. Rougemont himself will be one of the main players of the Congress of Europe held in The Hague (8-10 May 1948) and organised by the *International Committee of the Movements for European Unity* (subsequently to become the *European Movement* after the Congress), to heighten public opinion for European unity and achieve the creation of common institutions (the first European institution, the Council of Europe, would in fact be born the year after). At The Hague Congress, Rougemont would try in vain to defend the proposals of the federalists (including the attribution of concrete powers to the Council of Europe), faced with the strength of Churchill's unionists, who opposed any kind of European federation. In the following years, Rougemont and Marc's commitment to bring integral federalism onto the European scenario would be very active, both in terms of practical initiatives and on the theoretical level, aiming at a philosophical foundation of federalism¹¹⁷. Denis de Rougemont will especially engage in the direction of the *Centre Européen de la Culture*, which will be inaugurated in Geneva on 7 October 1950 as an outcome of The Hague Congress, with the purpose of implementing cultural and educational initiatives to develop in Europeans the awareness of a common cultural identity. In the following years, Rougemont will also engage in the foundation of the *Institut universitaire d'études européennes* at the University of Geneva in 1963 and of the journal of European studies *Cadmos*, aimed at spreading pro-European ideals, personalism and integral federalism. Alexandre Marc, for his part, will found in 1954 the *Centre International de Formation Européenne* in Nice, linked in turn to the journal *L'Europe en Formation*, the *Institut européen des hautes Études internationales* in Nice and the *Collège universitaire d'Études fédéralistes* in Aosta, which counts Marc himself among its founders. Despite the strong commitment of the two former ON members, as well as of other intellectuals close to them, such as Hendrik Brugmans, co-founder of the UEF and of the *Collège d'Europe* in Bruges, integral federalism will gradually lose its hold on the debate on Europe's future, especially after the Treaties of Paris and Rome and the rise of the functionalist strategy and the intergovernmental method of integration. The project of a European

¹¹⁷ As for Alexandre Marc we may recall *À hauteur d'homme. La révolution Fédéraliste*, Je Sers, Paris 1948; *Dialectique du déchaînement. Fondements philosophiques du fédéralisme*, Éditions La Colombe, Paris 1961; *De la Méthodologie à la dialectique*, Presses d'Europe, Paris 1970; *Fondements du Fédéralisme. Destin de l'homme à venir*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1997. As for Denis de Rougemont we may recall *L'Europe en jeu*, Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel 1948; *Lettre ouverte aux Européens*, Albin Michel, Paris 1970; *L'Un et le Divers*, Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel 1970.

union that, according to ON, had to be built from the bottom up, starting from civil society and the basic cells of public life, will thus be exclusively led by those nation-states that the Non-conformistes of *Ordre Nouveau* considered some twenty years earlier as Europe's worst enemies.



Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
via Monfalcone, 17/19



& Ass. AlboVersorio Edizioni
Senago (MI)
via Martiri di Belfiore, 11

© Metabasis.it, rivista semestrale di filosofia e comunicazione.
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Varese n. 893 del 23/02/2006.
ISSN 1828-1567



Quest'opera è stata rilasciata sotto la licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione-NonCommerciale-NoOpereDerivate 2.5 Italy. Per leggere una copia della licenza visita il sito web <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/it/> o spedisci una lettera a Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.