

**RUSSIAN PERSONALISM: THE INFLUENCE OF RUSSIAN POPULISM ON
FRENCH PERSONALISM, 1930-1938.**

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1930-1938

ABSTRACT

The French personalist movement (1930-1938) finds its origins in French Neo-criticism and Thomism, and German existentialism. The contribution of Russian religious-populist philosophy has not yet been studied. Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) incorporated this tradition in his philosophy. Exiled after the Russian Revolution, he brought his version of Russian "personalism" to France, where his works were seized as a manifesto by the French personalist movements *L'Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit*. Alexandre Marc (1904-), another exile, and Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) tried to reconstruct the Russian *mir* as a French institution. Populism envisioned Russia as a decentralized federation of autonomous *mirs*; likewise, French personalists advocated a federalized European union in which communal *patries* would serve as the primary unit of government. Russian populism presented models for and was perpetuated by the French personalists. The influence of Russian ideas on French personalism offers a new dimension to the History of ideas.

RÉSUMÉ

Le néo-critique et le thomisme français et l'existentialisme allemand sont les origines réputés du personnalisme français (1930-1938), mais la contribution de la philosophie religieuse et populiste russe n'a pas encore été examinée. Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) a incorporé cette tradition dans sa propre philosophie. Exilé après la révolution russe, il a apporté à la France sa propre version du "personnalisme" russe. Les groupements personnalistes *L'Ordre Nouveau* et *Esprit* ont embrassé ses œuvres comme manifeste social et politique. Alexandre Marc (1904-), un autre exilé, et Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) ont tenté de créer une institution française en transposant le *mir* russe. Comme le populisme russe considérait la Russie une fédération décentralisée de *mir*s autonomes, les personnalistes français préconisaient une union européenne fédérale dans laquelle l'unité primordiale de gouvernement serait la patrie communale. L'influence des idées russes sur le personnalisme français fait de nouvelles recherches de l'Histoire des mentalités.

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FOOTNOTE ABBREVIATIONS:

C&C: Nikolai Berdyaev, Christianity and Class War (New York, 1933).

D&R: Nikolai Berdyaev, Dream and Reality (London, 1950)

DM: Nikolai Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man. (London, 1937).

DOS: Nikolai Berdyaev, Dostoevsky (New York, 1957)

ER: Nikolai Berdyaev, The End of the Renaissance, in The End of Our Time (New York, 1933)

FS: Nikolai Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit. (London, 1935).

MH: Nikolai Berdyaev, The Meaning of History. (New York, 1962).

NMA: Nikolai Berdyaev, The New Middle Ages., in The End of Our Time. (New York, 1933).

OE: Emmanuel Mounier, Oeuvres Vol. 1., (Paris, 1961).

ORC: Nikolai Berdyaev, The Origins of Russian Communism. (London, 1937).

ROS: B. Rosenthal & M. Bonachevsky-Chomiak, trans. & eds., A Revolution of the Spirit: Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890-1924. (New York, 1990).

RP: James Edie, J. Scanlan, M. Zeldin, trans. & eds., Russian Philosophy. Vols. 1-3. (Chicago, 1969).

S&F: Nikolai Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom. (London, 1944).

Vekhi: Marshal Shatz & J. Zimmerman, trans. & eds., "*Vekhi: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Intelligentsia*." Canadian Slavic Studies. (1967-1969).

Introduction.

The personalist movement began in France in the 1930s. Predominantly centred around the Parisian reviews *Esprit* and *l'Ordre Nouveau*, personalism aspired to a "third way" which both combined and transcended the prevalent ideologies of individualism and communism. The personalists were reacting against the apparent oppression and incompetence of the existing political system in France, and to the atomization of modern society. Personalism advocated social responsibility and opposed the exploitation of people for profit; it offered an alternative to capitalism. The personalist movement was also a response to the encroaching ideologies of communism and fascism - committed to the particular, personalism regarded each person as a unique entity of infinite value; it abhorred the subjugation of any person to a "faceless collective"

French Personalism originated in 1931 with the publication of *l'Ordre Nouveau's* manifesto, written by a Russian emigre, Alexandre Marc:

WE ARE NEITHER INDIVIDUALISTS NOR COLLECTIVISTS, WE ARE PERSONALISTS!¹

In 1933, Emmanuel Mounier, a young French Catholic, launched the review *Esprit* to further the cause of the *personne*;

...c'est-à-dire sur cet *homme à la fois "libre" et "responsable"* - personnel et communautaire - les deux termes se garantissant réciproquement, qui devait servir

¹Christian Roy, 'Alexandre Marc and the Personalism of L'Ordre Nouveau, 1920-1940.' (Montreal, 1987) M.A. Thesis., 21. Alexandre Marc was the sole author of this manifesto.

Most historians attribute the founding of the personalist movement to Emmanuel Mounier and his review *Esprit*. In 1987, Christian Roy, inspired by the assertion of Denis de Rougemont that it was in fact *l'Ordre Nouveau* who inaugurated the movement, wrote a convincing thesis which clearly established the legitimacy of de Rougemont's claim.

de mesure à notre conception de la société."²

These two groups began the personalist revolution in France. The revolution would follow Péguy's dictate: "La révolution sera morale ou elle ne sera pas".³ Personalism was a celebration of the spiritual nature of human beings and an attempt to protect and further this spiritualism.

The starting point of the personalist revolution was the development of the integral personality: the personalists intended to educate all people in France - and eventually in Europe - in the full potential of their spiritual, as well as, material abilities. Developed persons would then form a new society: the land and the means of production would be held in common by those who worked it; persons would be reunited in a basic community, the *patrie*, where a sense of belonging could be fostered, and where similar interests would allow a true communion: the *patrie* would become the new centre of government in France. A decentralized federation of *patries* would together compose the "nation". Eventually the French personalists hoped that their ideology would result in a world organization of diverse federations which could peacefully coexist.

Although the personalist movement only attracted a small minority of intellectuals in France, the ideas which they expressed left an impressive legacy. In the 1930s, *Esprit's* circulation never exceeded 3000-4000⁴ and *l'Ordre Nouveau* peaked at 2000;⁵

²Denis de Rougemont, "Témoignage", Le Personnalisme d'Emmanuel Mounier, Hier et Demain. (Paris, 1985), 37.

³Emmanuel Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE, 37.

⁴William Rauch, Politics and Beliefs in Contemporary France. (The Hague, 1972), 305.

⁵Paul Lipiansky & Bernard Retanbach, Ordre et Démocratie, deux sociétés de la pensée: de L'Ordre Nouveau au Club Jean-Moulin. (Paris, 1967), 89.

neither group formed a political party, nor were any personalists elected into the French parliament prior to World War Two. However, in Vichy, some members of *l'Ordre Nouveau* participated in Pétain's "Révolution nationale"⁶ and Emmanuel Mounier assisted in the formation of the Unige school. Through these men, the personalist ideology influenced some of the policies of the Vichy regime.⁷ The legacy of personalism was even more apparent after the war. *The Commonwealth and Cross Currents* expounded *Esprit's* message in America, and similar movements in Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, Canada⁸, Africa, Poland, and Spain attribute their origins to *Esprit*.⁹ *L'Ordre Nouveau* inspired the movement towards a European federation and several of its members participated in the formation of the European Economic Community.¹⁰ Personalist

⁶The members of *l'Ordre Nouveau* who participated in the Vichy regime were: Robert Loustau, Jean Jardin, Robert Gibrat, Xavier de Lignac, and Albert Ollivier. [Lipiansky, 91.]

⁷Loustau was director of the Baudoin cabinet for Foreign affairs and influenced certain policies of Pétain. The Vichy *Charte du travail* expounded the themes raised by *l'Ordre Nouveau*. Moreover, much of the terminology used in the doctrine of the National Revolution was expressly personalist. However, by 1942, most of the personalists became disillusioned with Vichy; Mounier was even imprisoned by the regime. [Lipiansky, 92., John Hellman, Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950, (Toronto, 1981), 90-00.]

⁸The most famous "personalist" review in Canada is *Cité Libre* where Pierre Trudeau developed many of his political ideas.

⁹Rauch, 307.

¹⁰Alexandre Marc created "L'Union européen des fédéralistes" in 1946 which exists today and furthers the policies and organization of the EC. Robert Aron founded a similar movement, "La Fédération". Denis de Rougemont, a prominent member of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, participated in and reported on the Congrès de l'Europe à La Haye in 1948: this Congress was instrumental in the formation of the first loose European Trade Community, the predecessor to the EC. The influence of *l'Ordre Nouveau's* doctrine is clearly presented in the "charte fédéraliste" adopted by the Congrès du Mouvement fédéraliste européen in Montreal 1964. [Lipiansky, 92,93.]

doctrine also influenced Vatican II (1962), and the Centesimus Annus (1991).¹¹ Such a legacy indicates the importance of personalism and validates a study of its origins.

Historians attribute the founding of personalism to Emmanuel Mounier. They identify its origins in the French philosophy of: Proudhon, Péguy, Maritain and Bergson, they recognize the contributions of Germans Scheler, Stern, Heidegger and Nietzsche. However, Russian populist philosophy anticipated personalism in the concepts of *Godmanhood* and *sobornost'*, and several Russian emigres directly participated in the personalist movement in France. Although historians favour analysis of Westernization in Russia, they appear reluctant to conduct a similar study of the Russification of Europe. There are several reasons for this: the Russian language is both complex and unfamiliar; russophobia is an enduring Western trait; intellectually, Russians are often discounted as either "barbarians", or more recently, "communists". Thus, although personalist historians may mention the influence of specific Russians like Nikolai Berdyaev, Raissa Maritain, Alexandre Marc, Helen Iswolsky, Marc Chagall, and Diaghilev, they ignore the background from which these people emerged and they discount the unique influence of Russian ideas on the philosophy of personalism.¹²

¹¹The Pope condoned opposition to any economic system which denies the "free and personal nature of human work". He explained the failure of communism in the Soviet Union as a result of a "fundamental anthropological error in ignoring the transcendence of the human person". [*The Globe and Mail*, May 2, 1991., A9.]

¹²Hellman says: "Most of the earliest and most important articulations of personalism were by German-educated, militantly anti-communist Russians, Germans, and Belgians, who were Russian Orthodox, Jewish, or non-believers." [Hellman,5.]

Christian Roy discusses Marc's Russian background but draws no significant links between Russian philosophy and personalism.

Michael Kelly Pioneer of the Catholic Revival. The Ideas and Influence of Emmanuel Mounier. (London, 1979)., discusses the importance of Nikolai Berdyaev but

This thesis explores the Russian contribution to personalism. It finds an anticipation of French personalism in the two central tenets of the religious-populist tradition in Russia: *Godmanhood* and *sobornost'*. The elucidation of *Godmanhood* is most commonly connected with Vladimir Soloviev (1855-1900).¹³ However, *Godmanhood* - the conception of the human being as an integral entity in which the spiritual and material dimensions are combined allowing the person to act as the link between God and created matter - is a constant theme in Russian religious-populist philosophy.¹⁴ *Sobornost'* - an organic community in which the person retained his inherent worth and uniqueness and yet was inextricably bound to the community - was first expounded by the Slavophiles (1840-1860).¹⁵ They believed that *sobornost'* was

ignores the Russian roots of his philosophy.

Joseph Amato, Mounier and Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World. (Alabama, 1975)., sees Berdyaev as a contemporary and parallel philosopher to Jacques Maritain and he mentions the influence of Berdyaev's A New Middle Ages on French personalism, but he does not consider the Russian origins of Berdyaev's philosophy or the influence of Russian thought on French personalism [107]

William Rauch also highlights the importance of Berdyaev's philosophy and in particular emphasizes its existential nature; he mentions no Russian traditions which might have influenced Berdyaev's ideas and equates the philosopher to the French personalist existentialists, Paul Landsberg, Ricoeur, and Nédoncelle. [Rauch, 88].

¹³V. Soloviev, The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy (London, 1918).

¹⁴Soloviev, 160. The concept of the integral personality was first elucidated by the Slavophile philosopher Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856). It was a major theme in the novels of Dostoevsky (1823-1881), the central tenet of Soloviev's philosophy, and reappeared in the writings of Russia's "renaissance" idealists. Some of the more prominent figures in this renaissance were Dimitri Merezhkovsky, Andrei Bely, Alexandr Blok, Viacheslav Ivanov, Peter Struve, Semen Frank, Georgii Florovsky, the princes Trubetskoi, and Nikolai Berdyaev. *Godmanhood* was elaborated as a political ideology in the 1909 review *Vekhi* ["Signposts"].

¹⁵*Sobornost'* originated from Orthodox theology which outwardly extolled the superiority of the Orthodox synodal system and inwardly defined the Church, "not as a centre of teaching and authority, but as a congregation of lovers in Christ." [RP1, 161]

manifested in the *narod's*¹⁶ organic communities: the *mir* and *artel'*.¹⁷ It is the intention of this thesis to prove that the *obshchina*¹⁸ was an actual model for the *patrie*.

Godmanhood and *sobornost'* fused in the philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev and acted as the foundation for his "New Middle Ages". An analysis of his ideas clearly

Sobornost' continued to form the nucleus of populist ideology: it inspired the "going to the people" in the summer of 1874, the political doctrine of the Socialist Revolutionaries [SRs], and *Vekhi*.

When discussing the Slavophiles, I am referring to the original Slavophiles - Ivan Kireevsky (1806-56), Petr Kireevsky (1808-56), Alexis Khomyakov (1804-60), Constantine Aksakov (1817-60), and Yuri Samarin (1819-76) - not the Neo-slavophiles who advocated the formation of a Panslav federation to rule Europe. For a clear description of the differences between these two movements please see A. Walicki, The Slavophile Controversy. (Oxford, 1975), 495-508.

For a detailed examination of Slavophile ideology, see: Nicholas Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles. (Cambridge, 1956), Chapter 4. and Peter Christoff, An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Slavophilism. Vol 1-4., (Mouton, 1961).

¹⁶*Narod* is translated as "the people of a Nation" or "the Nation". The *narod* symbolizes a distinct group differentiated from the upper classes - until 1861 they were mostly serfs. Before the 1917 Revolution, *narod* generally applied to "peasants" - farmers - but could also refer to Russia's new proletariat. The word also conveys a symbolic judgement. To Slavophiles, the *narod* were a mystical body, the Russian "people"; they considered the *narod* inherently religious, humane, and superior to the "Germanized" intellectuals and bureaucrats. To "Westerners" - Russians who disparaged their own development and regarded the West as truly "civilized" - the *narod* were sometimes thought of as crude, ignorant peasants.

¹⁷*Mir*: "the world; peace; village community"; the people living in the *obshchina* [the *narod*] called their community the *mir*; this word symbolized the organic character, the personification of the community, which both the *narod* within and the intellectuals without attributed to this social organization.

The *artel'* was a collective organization of artisans. Like the *mir* it redistributed profit and collectively paid all obligations. The most comparable Western institution is the English guild.

¹⁸The correct historical term for both the *mir* and *artel'* communities is *obshchina* ["the village commune"]. *Obshchina* denotes the specifically Russian institution: a community of people living together and mutually sharing their obligations and profit. In Russia the right of property was granted first to God and then to the *obshchina*. Individuals only had right to usufruct (use of the land).

demonstrates the influence of Russian thought upon the development of French personalism. A second conduit is found in Alexandre Marc: educated in the Russian tradition and a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, Marc combined Russian populist ideas with those of European socialists to elaborate an active policy for French personalism. Berdyaev and Marc presented a formidable introduction of the "Russian idea" into 1930s France.

This thesis in no way intends to denigrate the French foundations of personalism; nor does it pretend that Berdyaev and Marc were the only transmitters of Russian ideology. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, both popular novelists in the West, represent by themselves a significant communication of Russian religious and populist ideas. After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 some three million Russians fled the war-torn country. Two hundred thousand ended up in France. The majority of these emigres came from the intelligentsia; lawyers, engineers, writers, professors, and clergy.¹⁹ Thus this thesis, in focusing on Berdyaev and Marc, only reveals a small proportion of the Russian impact.

In 1990, Marc Raeff published Russia Abroad which examined the influence of the post-Revolution Russian emigres on Europe.²⁰ This thesis furthers such research and adds a new dimension to the History of ideas. It was inspired by Christian Roy's thesis 'Alexandre Marc and the Personalism of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 1920-1940,' by John Hellman's ensuing work on Alexandre Marc's biography, and by the unpublished diaries

¹⁹Marc Raeff, Russia Abroad. (New York, 1990), 24.

²⁰Although this book concentrates on the literary and journalistic influences of Russians throughout the world after the Russian Revolution, it is one of the most concrete histories of Russification yet published. I therefore thank Marc Raeff for furthering my work on a subject which has hitherto been neglected by historians.

of Alexandre Marc (1916-1923) which indicate the impact of Russian populist ideas on Marc's personalist ideology. The author would like to thank Christian Roy for giving her access to Marc's diaries, and Professor Hellman for providing her with transcripts on his interview with Alexandre Marc in 1985 and other unpublished material.

Chapter.1 Meetings: The Commencement of Personalism in France.

In 1928, a young Russian emigre, Alexandre Marc (1904-) organized the *Club du Moulin Vert* where Parisian intellectuals could meet and discuss the problems of their time. Marc's first recruits were Jean Jardin and René Dupuis - fellow students from L'Ecole libre des sciences politiques de Paris where Marc had studied law and politics - and Gabriel Rey and Jacques Naville who worked with Marc at the Librairie Hachette.¹ These young men came from different backgrounds and possessed diverse ideologies, but they were united by their common disagreement with the established revolutionary movements of their time, and by their anger at the ineptitude and lack of direction offered by the French government.² Their meetings resulted in the gradual formation of a new revolutionary program aimed at counteracting the current problems of France. One of their early ideas was to abandon France and move to Canada in order to "fonder une petite colonie où bien nous tentons quelque chose pour sauver la civilisation européenne".³

Marc was predisposed to political action from an early age. His parents were affiliated with the Mensheviks, and they were members of Russia's small bourgeois class; their primary concerns were social and economic, not philosophical. Thus Marc was encouraged to read literature (Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Pushkin and Gorky), and

¹Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, Les Non-Conformistes des années 30. (Paris, 1969.), 81.

²Lipiansky, 9.

³Loubet del Bayle, 82.

apply what he learned to the cause of social change.⁴ This early exposure to social activism was augmented by Marc's experience in the Russian Revolution. Despite his youth, Marc was able to join a Socialist Revolutionary Party cell (he was attracted to a seventeen-year-old SR girl) where he learned the life of a revolutionary: meetings, demonstrations, and avoiding arrest⁵ culminated with his participation in a protest against the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1918. The Bolsheviks dispersed the crowd with machine guns and Marc, his mother, and the anarchist Voline, were the only survivors.⁶ This experience ended Marc's youth. He had learned to despise "mob-rule": "The mob hates everything that is clean, everyone in the world who aspires to the highest. Mobs hate the truth..."⁷ And he shunned the marxist vision of utopia which inspired such collective violence. Later, in reading Alexander Herzen's (1812-1870) From

⁴Alexandre Marc, Vuipiskii (Diary), unpublished, (1916-1923), Feb. 6, 1916. Marc was encouraged to give money to the poor, and when he "wasted" money on Sherlock Holmes and Pinkerton Mysteries, his parents scolded him. They wanted him to be conscientious about money and to realize how other people suffered from the lack of it. [Ibid., Feb. 8, 1916]. In 1916, a family discussion about Turgenev, prompted the twelve-year-old Marc to copy a section of A Sportsman's Sketches into his diary; he was attracted by Turgenev's "sincere and loving" description of "nature and rural existence". [Ibid., Feb. 17, 1916.] Marc read the Populist journals *Young Russia* and *The Guiding Fire* in the library and especially enjoyed the article, "From the *Narod*". [Feb. 23, 1916].

⁵Marc's fear of arrest is most clearly indicated in his diary. When he began to participate with the SRs, he constructed a code so that he could write down his ideas "without the fear of being understood. It is necessary to practice this deceit so that I can forget about it because if anything written here is found by others, all is lost for me". [Diary, Oct. 18, 1917]

⁶John Hellman, "Interviews with Alexandre Marc." Cogne Italy, 1985., 2a8. See also Denis de Rougemont. Journal d'une époque. (Paris, 1968), 93, 94.

⁷Marc, Diary. March 5, 1918.

the Other Shore, Marc was vindicated by the author's tragic prediction of the results of a communist revolution, and he agreed with Herzen's assertion that the death of one man was as tragic as the end of humanity.⁸

In 1929 Marc broadened the scope of the *Club du Moulin Vert* meetings to analyze the three Christian traditions: Protestantism, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. The group now included leading Protestant pastors, Catholic clergy and intellectuals, and the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev who represented the Orthodox view.⁹

⁸Alexander Herzen, From the Other Shore, (London, 1956), 40., cited in Marc's Diary, July 19, 1919.

"The whole of Europe will leave its normal courses and will be drowned in a general cataclysm...Exhausted and starving peoples will submit to everything, and military discipline will take the place of law and of every kind of orderly administration. Then the victors will begin to fight for their loot. Civilisation, industry, terrified, will flee to England and America, taking with them from the general ruin, some their money, others their scientific knowledge or their unfinished work.. And then, on the brink of suffering and disaster, a new war will break out, home grown, internal, the revenge of the *have-nots against the haves*...Communism will sweep across the world in a violent tempest - dreadful, bloody, unjust, swift; in thunder and lightning, amid the fire of the burning palaces, upon the ruin of factories and public buildings the New Commandments will be enunciated...the basic tone will be set by socialism. The institutions and structure of our own time and *civilisation* will perish - will, as Proudhon politely puts it, be *liquidated*.

You regret the death of civilisation?

I, too, I am sorry.

But the masses will not regret it; the masses to whom it gave nothing but tears, want, ignorance and humiliation... Socialism will develop in all its phases until it reaches its own extremes and absurdities. Then there will again burst forth from the titanic breast of the revolting minority a cry of denial. Once more a mortal battle will be joined in which socialism will occupy the place of today's conservatism, and will be defeated by the coming revolution as yet invisible to us..." [Herzen as cited in Isaiah Berlin, Russian Thinkers, (New York, 1978), 97.]

⁹Loubet del Bayle, 82. It was during these discussions that Charles du Bos introduced Marc to the Swiss Protestant Denis de Rougemont. The regular participants now included R.P. Congar, Gabriel Marcel, Pasteurs Dominice, Westphal, and de Pury, Berdyaev, and Father Gillet.

Marc had always been interested in religion. His parents were wealthy Jews who eschewed religion and attempted to shield him from such "superstition". However, in 1914, his grandfather secretly orchestrated his Bar Mitzvah and subsequently Marc began to study religion. he read the Talmud, Confucius, Buddha, and the Hindu Vedas, and Merezhkovsky's Christ and Antichrist (1896-1905). Marc was not a believer seeking to justify his faith from within, but an agnostic who conducted a systematic search for the meaning of faith and religion. He asserted that "the reading of Merezhkovsky was the first step in my formation of a religious vision."¹⁰ Despite his early religious exposure, the Russian Revolution turned Marc away from God. He proclaimed that "God is a despot!" and like Bakunin, suggested that the greatest favour God could do for humanity was to disappear.¹¹ Not surprisingly, he found Nietzsche's writings very appealing as he grappled with ideas of "the abyss", godlessness, and the future.¹²

The religious meetings of the *Club du Moulin Vert* allowed Marc to resume his acquaintance with Berdyaev. Marc and his parents escaped the Bolshevik regime in 1919, and moved to France where Marc was enrolled in school and finished his baccalaureate in mathematics; in 1922 he rejoined his parents in Berlin. Berdyaev was already

¹⁰Interview, 1a8.

¹¹Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) was Russia's "first professional revolutionary". [RP1, 379.] A fervent anarchist, Bakunin asserted that the greatest favour God could do for humanity was to disappear; God's continued existence ensured that humanity would never be free; it would always be subjected to God's omnipotent power. Bakunin, God and the State. (New York, 1970).

¹²Diary, March, 5, 1918.

established in Berlin where he formed an Orthodox discussion group, lectured at the University, and wrote his famous book The New Middle Ages (1923). Marc was fascinated by many of Berdyaev's ideas (although Berdyaev was unable to convert him to Orthodoxy) and participated in Berdyaev's home meetings.¹³

Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) was a strong proponent of a universal Christian church. A disciple of Vladimir Soloviev¹⁴, Berdyaev organized Christian discussion groups in Berlin and then France after his exile from Russia in 1922. Although Berdyaev was concerned with religious matters, his predominant interest was philosophy. Berdyaev occupies an unique position in the history of Russian intellectual thought. His work is both a culmination of the religious-populist tradition of the nineteenth century¹⁵ and a

¹³Roy, 11

¹⁴Soloviev believed in the possibility of universal Christianity and was claimed by both the Catholics and the Orthodox as an important religious thinker. See Helen Iswolsky, Light Before Dusk: A Russian Catholic in France, 1923-1941 (Toronto, 1942) Chapter 2-4.

¹⁵Berdyaev studied philosophy at the University of Kiev from 1895 to 1898. He was strongly influenced by the Slavophiles, Dostoevsky, Soloviev, and Leontiev. In his writings, Berdyaev appraised the unique Russian philosophical tradition and applied it to his own philosophy.

There are, of course, many strains in Russian philosophy, but there is also something common to them all, something original, the formation of a new philosophical tradition distinct from the reigning traditions of contemporary European philosophy. In its basic tendency Russian philosophy carries on the great philosophical traditions of the past, the Greek and the German, the spirit of Plato and the spirit of classical German idealism live on in it. But German idealism never went beyond the stage of extreme abstraction and extreme rationalism that culminated with Hegel. Beginning with Khomiakov, Russian philosophers sharply criticized Hegel's abstract idealism and rationalism, and they moved on not to empiricism, not to neo-criticism, but to *concrete idealism*, to ontological realism, to a mystical corrective to European philosophy's reason, which had lost its vital essence. And one cannot fail to see in this development the creative promise of a new path for philosophy. Russian philosophy is greatly

starting point for "personalism" or Christian socialism. Berdyaev adopted the Russian populist opposition to individualism and capitalism; from the Slavophiles, Dostoevsky and Soloviev, he learned to despise the materialist conception of human beings and the limitations of rational philosophy. However, Berdyaev's personal experience in Russia and his unique talents led him to go beyond these traditions and form an original philosophy and ideology. Berdyaev's ideology offered a "third way" contrary to the dominant ideologies of liberal capitalism and communism.

The most comprehensive expression of this "third way" is contained in Berdyaev's The New Middle Ages which Marc read in Berlin¹⁶ and which was translated into French in 1927. In 1930, Marc's *Club du Moulin Vert* decided to transcend their futile discussions and lead a revolution to create a new France modeled upon the theories expounded in this book. Characterizing themselves as:

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.¹⁷

concerned with religion, and it reconciles knowledge and faith. [Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth." in *Vekhi.*, 170, 171.]

¹⁶ Marc was most attracted to Berdyaev's commitment to the supremacy of the person. A strong advocate of personal freedoms and rights, Berdyaev gained many followers by his attacks on the Marxist-Bolshevik enslavement of Russia. Berdyaev's commitment to Christianity and his assertion that the world was entering a new spiritualized, Christian era obviously influenced Marc; he copied Berdyaev's command into his diary: "our work is the realization of God in the world, so that we put God before all of our ideas, not as the criminal of the world, but as the ideal of the world." [Marc, "Diary.", Sept. 13, 1919.]

¹⁷Gabriel Rey, cited in Loubet del Bayle, 83.

they published their *Manifeste pour un Ordre Nouveau* which stated: "We are neither individualists nor collectivists, we are personalists!"¹⁸ Thus, the *Club du Moulin Vert* became the revolutionary party *L'Ordre Nouveau*. This manifesto marks the start of the personalist movement in France

L'Ordre Nouveau's personalism ran directly counter to the two prevailing ideologies of their time: communism and capitalism. Aware of the growing dislocation in French society and the failure of the existing political system to offer a concrete future vision, they considered the *entre-deux-guerres* years an "âge d'inquiétude". Personalism offered an alternative to the current system in France, and also to the radical solutions of fascism or communism.

France had emerged devastated from World War One: two million Frenchmen had died, its economic infrastructure was shattered and it faced massive national debts. Yet by 1926, France was operating at or above pre-war levels. The swift reconstruction was not without its victims as high inflation and taxation created wider class divisions and rapid industrialization produced slums, poverty, and social dislocation. Economic hardship and the widening of class divisions undermined faith in capitalism and demanded concrete social change, but the inefficiency of the liberal democratic system obstructed France's ability to find solutions within its political structure. The proletariat turned increasingly to communism or syndicalism.¹⁹

¹⁸Roy, 21. Although Marc wrote this manifesto, Gabriel Rey and Gabriel Marcel also signed it.

¹⁹Kelly, 3-28., René Rémond "Le climat des années trente." Le Personnalisme d'Emmanuel Mounier, Hier et Demain. (Paris, 1985), 22.

The French ruling elite was understandably concerned with this trend: the Bolshevik success in Russia and their increasing campaigns to spread communism through the Third International, inspired fears that France might be plunged into a communist revolution. However, the conservatives were not the only ones who were apprehensive; Marc and his fellow emigres had witnessed the Bolshevik revolution and dreaded a repetition of the violence and communist-type rule. Moreover, a large number of French intellectuals, especially ardent Catholics, abhorred the concept of atheist communism.

Nevertheless, *L'Ordre Nouveau* sympathized with the rising discontent with the current order. They condemned liberal capitalism for its denial of the value of human beings and its acceptance of a vicious cycle of productivity. Capitalism not only exploited workers for some individual's profit, but also enslaved the entrepreneurs and "Captains of industry". It was a mechanism controlled by positive feedback: as production increased, so too did consumption, resulting in yet another increase in production to meet rising demands and to produce capital to buy even more goods.²⁰ The law of economics and production became the primary reality, of greater importance than people, spiritual development, or creativity. Thus, the personalists denied the totality of marxism in that they did not consider exploitation or class differences to be the essential problem of capitalism, rather they asserted that it destroyed all people regardless of class.

Dans la plupart des cas la tyrannie [capitalism] n'est plus le fait d'un

²⁰Marc, "Le Prolétariat." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933.), 556-569. *L'Ordre Nouveau* only began publishing its own review in May, 1933. Before that time, the members of *l'Ordre Nouveau* published their opinions in *Combat*, *Plans*, and *Esprit*.

individu, ni d'une classe, mais d'un mécanisme ou d'une méthode, et ne porte plus sur des individus ni sur des classes, mais sur l'ensemble patrons et ouvriers assujettis à cette méthode.²¹

However, they did agree with Marx that capitalism had caused human beings to become objects subjected to the inhuman dictatorship of money and the economy.²²

Although *L'Ordre Nouveau* accepted the existence of the proletarian problem, they did not believe that the proletariat should be considered in abstract theory but sociologically, as an human condition.

"condition prolétarienne" plutôt que de "prolétaire" car il s'agit à la limite d'un type de société plutôt que d'un statut réservé à quelques individus particuliers. Si l'ouvrier industriel est le premier touché par ce phénomène, il n'est pas le seul: L'employé, le technicien, l'entrepreneur indépendant, l'intellectuel "désintéressé" voient s'appesantir sur eux la même menace.²³

They believed that all people living in a liberal capitalist society were subsumed to production's tyrannical mechanism, degraded, atomized, and in a state of despair. Having revealed the inherent dangers of capitalism, the personalists emphatically protested the extension of its destructive powers to other countries through imperialism and colonization.²⁴

Politically, inter-war France was chaotic and disrupted. Neither the *Bloc National* immediately after the war, nor Herriot's more socialist leadership could satisfy the electorate and solve France's economic problems. Government after government was

²¹Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, La Révolution nécessaire. (Paris, 1933), 46.

²²Mounier, Personalism, (London, 1952), 103.

²³A. Marc, "Esclavage pas mort." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Nov. 1935), 972,

²⁴George Izard, "Europe: Terre inhumaine." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932), 218-226.

overturned as incompetent. The political parties and movements were themselves constantly sundered by disagreements: the "Right" became a confusing amalgam of monarchists, fascists, Catholic nationalists, and industrialists; the "Left" was even more divided between orthodox communists, Catholic socialists, non-denominational socialists, radical socialists, and various groups of syndicalists; heated debates ensued in the press between Alain, *l'Action française*, Léon Blum, and Tardieu. To *L'Ordre Nouveau* and other young intellectuals, this situation indicated a desperate need for a new French ideology which could unify France and transcend this senseless bickering.

It was for this reason that *l'Ordre Nouveau* opposed the parliamentary system. They asserted that parliament had turned democracy into a synonym "de mensonge, de veulerie, de médiocrité et de compromission".²⁵ Special interest groups, stifling ritual, abuse of public funds on banquets and superfluous projects, and bureaucratic inefficiency led *L'Ordre Nouveau* to compare parliament to a Chicago abattoir.²⁶ But, most of all, the personalists believed that the parliamentary system could never be reformed or corrected because in truth the elected parliament did not govern; rather some six hundred appointed, anonymous, officials held all the power and implemented all the policies in

²⁵"Le parlement contre l'esprit." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Oct. 1933)., 285.

²⁶"L'idée, comme le cochon, entre vivante dans l'usine, le parlement, amenée sur un palan, le parti, et ressort de l'autre côté, sous forme de lois aussi nombreuses, diverses et standardisées que le boudin, le jambon et la saucisse, les députés et sénateurs stérilisant les idées et les sentiments de leurs commettants par des méthodes aussi parfaitement taylorisées que le geste des nègres chargés, à Chicago, de saigner les cochons à leur entrée dans la <<chaîne>>." ["Le dernier carré." *L'Ordre Nouveau*., (Oct. 1933)., 299.]

France; parliament was, in their view, completely impotent and irrelevant.²⁷

Having condemned parliament, it is not surprising that the personalists had no respect for political parties. They viewed the "right" as being committed to property, family, country, and religion: capitalist property, egotistical family ties, rabid nationalism, and pharisaical piety. Rightist ideology was inundated with hypocrisy and applauded useless martyrdom instead of constructive spirituality. They used heroism, not to lead or inspire, but rather to distract the masses from their legitimate complaints; parades and simple ideas were the panacea for social problems, as bread and circuses had been in Ancient Rome.²⁸ Left-wing parties, the personalists acknowledged, had effected some useful social programs and inspired admirable trends in art and literature. But, founded upon the emotions of envy and malice, the "left" was tainted with the blight of materialism and was prepared to sacrifice the spirit and freedom of people for bread.²⁹ In their final analysis, the personalists asserted that political parties were nothing more than a tool of the state: "il est la projection de l'étatisme dans la vie <<publique>> de la société. Il est donc nécessairement abstrait, oppressif, centralisateur".³⁰

Essentially, the personalist attack on liberal democracy focused on its acceptance of the omnipotent state. As capitalism had enslaved people to the economic mechanism so too had the state ceased to serve the people and become a totalitarian, inhuman

²⁷"Le parlement contre l'esprit." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Oct. 1933), 288.

²⁸Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE, 139.

²⁹Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 140.

³⁰"La mort des partis." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Oct. 1933), 311.

mechanism.

Tout, aujourd'hui dans l'État, tend à cette uniformisation dans l'abstrait. Une centralisation qui a paru longtemps une nécessité et dont on commence seulement à soupçonner la maladie, qui est le gigantisme, aboutit à nier les différences fondamentales, celles que les traditions, les influences régionales, les résurgences ethniques, enracinent au coeur de l'homme.³¹

Thus the French personalists firmly opposed liberal capitalism and liberal democratic parliamentarianism.

However, they had no more sympathy for the marxist alternative of communism. The personalists accepted Berdyaev's interpretation that marxism was hopelessly entangled in the methodology of capitalism.³² Both were governed by the policies of money and things: they had denied any value to the person; they had turned people into objects to be passed back and forth in their avaricious hands.³³ Pointing to the Soviet Union, the personalists saw in the only realization of marxism a horrible exaggeration of all the faults of the capitalism. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" had resulted in state capitalism which denied liberty of the press and degraded the dignity of humanity.

C'est en Russie "communiste", affirme René Dupuis, que les tares essentielles du capitalisme bourgeois ont atteint leur plus haut degré et que l'exploitation du prolétariat est la plus intense, la plus cynique, la plus étendue³⁴

³¹"L'État contre l'homme." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1933), 33.

³²This will be elucidated in Chapter 3. Berdyaev's most comprehensive analysis of communism is contained in Christianity and Class War. (New York., 1933).

³³Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE, 140., and Marc, "Le prolétariat." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933), 556-569.

³⁴Lipiansky, 38.

I They believed that a communist France, like communist Russia, would be even more despotic than the current order.

Finally, although *L'Ordre Nouveau*, accepted some of the truths expounded by fascism, they did not embrace it as an alternative path for France. The fascists were correct in their exposure of the liberal lie, their denunciation of capitalism, the rule of money and state control, and in their attempts to create spiritual, complete human beings. However, the final results of fascism were unacceptable to the personalists: Italy created an absolute totalitarian state ruled by a new Caesar, and allowed practical considerations to excuse violence, the subjugation of individuals, and the denial of human freedom.³⁵ Moreover, the fascist conception of spiritualism had turned work and the nation into religious idols in whose name any perversion could be legitimized.

Thus the French personalists opposed all existing ideologies. Their general criticism was that these orders all created spiritless societies, destroyed the human morale, and sacrificed humanity to some inanimate mechanism. To counteract these systems, the personalists advocated their "third way".

In 1930, Arnaud Dandieu joined *L'Ordre Nouveau* and became their dominant doctrinaire.³⁶ A year later, *L'Ordre Nouveau* joined the editorial team of the "stylish" review *Plans* (they did not commence publication of their own review, *L'Ordre Nouveau*, until 1933), where they outlined their program for the personalist revolution. *L'Ordre*

³⁵"Lettre à Hitler." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Nov. 1933), and Marc, "Chronique de la troisième force: Vers un Ordre Nouveau." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932)., 330-334.

³⁶See Roy, 24-26, 82-87., and Lipiansky, 8-11, 21., for details on Dandieu's philosophy and doctrine.

Nouveau advocated a spiritual revolution to transform the stature of the person. They also intended to restructure France completely. Earlier discussions convinced the members of *L'Ordre Nouveau* that France's most serious problem was its exclusively rational, materialist ideology. *L'Ordre Nouveau* considered human beings to be both an amalgamation of atoms and a spiritual entity; it was the latter characteristic which they intended to resurrect among the French people. Once people accepted their spiritual dimension, the true repository of their uniqueness, and became *personnes* they would no longer fear or wish to degrade other people. This personal realization was the first and necessary step towards the formation of real communities. Politically and economically, *L'Ordre Nouveau* advocated the complete decentralization of France: developed persons would form homogeneous communities, *patries*, and govern themselves; the *patries* would exist in a loose federation with a centralized state limited to the role of intermediary; power would reside in the *patrie*.

Marc was prepared for revolutionary activism by his experience with the SRs in Russia; his commitment to a personalist vision had been engendered by reading Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) at the age of ten. The critic's assertion that it is the "person" who plays the principle role,³⁷ caused Marc to question the validity of marxist economic determinism despite his parents' unswerving allegiance to marxism. Marc asserts: "And there and then I became 'personalist'".³⁸ This was why he joined the SRs: he agreed

³⁷"Interviews.", 7a-333. "The personality is higher than history, greater than society, greater than humanity!" [Belinsky, "Letter to Gogol", Philosophical Works. (Westport, CT., 1981)., 542.]

³⁸Interviews, 7a-333.

with Victor Chernov's "dream" - subjective methodology - which considered each world system a function of the personal ambitions and efforts of its people; one person could change society.³⁹ It was this history which prompted Marc to participate in a personalist revolution to change France.

It was at *Plans* that Alexandre Marc met the young Emmanuel Mounier, who was fascinated by *L'Ordre Nouveau's* doctrine, and asked Marc to help with the formation of his review, *Esprit*.⁴⁰ Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) came to Paris in 1927. Raised and educated in Grenoble, Mounier had been sheltered from the harsh realities of modern industrialized France. A fervent Catholic, he arrived in Paris as Catholics were beginning to re-enter the political arena, advocating social change. The Catholic Church was also affected by the "disorder of the times". Traditionally it had backed "rightist" politics and ardent nationalism, but the economic situation increasingly forced Rome to formulate a new policy regarding the proletariat. In 1926, Rome placed the ultra-nationalist review *l'Action française* on the Index of prohibited books: "...la dissociation [entre *l'Action française* et l'institution ecclésiastique] a libéré des énergies captives et commencé à

³⁹Diary, April 17, 1918. Victor Chernov (1873-1952) was the ideologue of the SRs. He attempted to combine traditional Russian populism with communism in order to produce an agrarian-based revolutionary ideology. The success of his approach was indicated by the results of the 1918 Constituent Assembly: the SRs won a majority with 38% of the vote.

⁴⁰Roy, 42. Historians categorize *Esprit* as Mounier's review because Mounier became the central focus and the moving force behind it. The other founding members soon abandoned *Esprit* for more concrete and active movements. Mounier was also responsible for the rejuvenation of *Esprit* after WWII. Like *L'Ordre Nouveau*, *Esprit* was a communal endeavour, but it is undeniable that Mounier was the essential catalyst in its production. [Amato, 109]

réorienter une génération de chrétiens vers d'autres perspectives de pensée et d'action".⁴¹

Thus although Rome refused to sanction socialism, it had given Catholic intellectuals a clear signal to become involved in social and political change to the "left".⁴² The impressionable and optimistic Mounier joined the fray: in 1928 he began frequenting the meetings at Jacques and Raissa Maritain's home, where he was introduced to a group of personalist advocates that included Gabriel Marcel, Charles du Bos, Marcel Arland, and Nikolai Berdyaev.

Arriving in Paris in 1924, Berdyaev established a forum at the Russian House where Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants could meet and exchange ideas. Through this group he met Père Gillet, the General of the Dominican Order, Pasteur Boegner, Jacques Maritain, and other members of France's religious elite. His acquaintance with Maritain flourished in a long and abiding friendship as Berdyaev was immediately included in the Maritain gatherings and invited Maritain to similar meetings at his home.⁴³ Berdyaev enjoyed the resulting discussions and often referred to the Maritain group as, "the flower of contemporary French Catholicism".⁴⁴ It was through Maritain that he met Emmanuel Mounier.

In 1929, Mounier became involved with a Catholic group, the *Davidées*.

⁴¹Rémond, 28.

⁴²Kelly, 16., also see John Hellman, "The Opening to the Left in French Catholicism: The Role of the Personalists." Journal of the History of Ideas. (1973): 381-390.

⁴³D&R, 263. Included in these meetings were: Charles du Bos, Gabriel Marcel, Massignon, an expert on Moslem mysticism, Etienne Gilson; and later: Dornte de Parge, Fumet, and Mounier. For a description of these meetings see Iswolsky, Chapter 5-7.

⁴⁴D&R., 264.

Consisting mostly of Catholic teachers, the group held devotional and intellectual retreats and published a monthly journal *Aux Davidées*. They were concerned with social problems and the increasing secularism of state institutions. As teachers, they hoped to reinject Christian spirituality into the lives of their students.⁴⁵ This was Mounier's first attempt at action, more appealing to a young intellectual than pure scholarship.⁴⁶

Berdyaev found it both bizarre and disturbing that the French intellectuals regarded themselves as the "touchstone" of political movements, yet were completely divorced from politics. He rarely saw any political figures at intellectual meetings, and the intellectuals never entered political circles. Thus he felt more sympathy with the new generation of French intellectuals, like Mounier, who were prepared to consider concrete political action, rather than, "just stew in their own juice".⁴⁷ In his autobiography, Berdyaev describes Mounier as "a man of great intellectual gifts and remarkable energy. He [Mounier] was a Roman Catholic, but his social and political views were at variance with the accepted Roman Catholic position in these matters."⁴⁸

In 1932, Mounier was asked by his friend Georges Izard to join André Déléage and Émile Galey in the founding of a review similar to *Plans*. France's political and economic situation had continued to deteriorate, and the bourgeoisie was greatly affected

⁴⁵Kelly 18-20, Hellman, Emmanuel Mounier op.cit., 26. French Catholics also perceived that a Masonic and Jewish conspiracy was afoot in France; placing all educational and legal establishment in the hands of these "fringe-groups".

⁴⁶Kelly, 19.

⁴⁷D&R., 273.

⁴⁸D&R., 274.

by the world-wide depression. Mounier, and other young Catholic intellectuals felt a duty to respond to these problems. They were encouraged in this by the 1931 encyclical of Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo anno, which condemned the excesses of capitalism and individualism. The Pope warned of a new urgency in the need for reforms and suggested the establishment of a "just wage", guarantees of employment, and some profit-sharing with the worker.⁴⁹ Thus, despite their poverty and lack of sponsors, the four idealists enthusiastically embarked upon their risky venture and launched *Esprit*. Maritain came to Mounier's aid and helped them enlist subscribers to fund the review. Alexandre Marc brought the force of *L'Ordre Nouveau* to assist in the development of *Esprit's* doctrine and Nikolai Berdyaev participated in the doctrinal sessions.⁵⁰

Maritain believed that the creation of a review where Catholics could express their ideas was both necessary and timely. Although Mounier and his friends refused to make *Esprit* a "Catholic" journal, Maritain approved of their approach: Maritain interpreted *Esprit's* commitment to the primacy of the spiritual as an acceptance of Divine Revelation; his Thomist philosophy which encouraged humanity to develop its "supernatural" abilities concurred with *Esprit's* conception of personalism.⁵¹ Berdyaev also attributed his involvement with *Esprit* to their personalist ideology:

⁴⁹J. Salwyn Schapiro, Movements of Social Dissent in Modern Europe. (Toronto, 1962), 37.

⁵⁰For a detailed description of the formation of *Esprit* see Loubet del Bayle, 123-137, and Hellman, 36-51.

⁵¹Moreover, the majority of *Esprit's* members were Catholics, fuelling Maritain's aspirations for a Catholic revival in France. [Amato, 107.]

The professed personalism of the group [*Esprit*], with which I was in special sympathy, was not a system but an attitude or theme expressing a search for the transformation of the objective world into a personal universe - an attitude in which the human person is the principle object and irreducible subject of knowledge.⁵²

As Alexandre Marc and *L'Ordre Nouveau* had already expressed an almost identical ideology, and because they were attempting to expand their revolution to its widest dimensions, they viewed the inauguration of *Esprit* with approval and lent their full assistance to Mounier.⁵³

Marc's attempts to expand *L'Ordre Nouveau's* revolution were successful, at least in the case of *Esprit*. When the first issue of *Esprit* was published in October, 1932, it advocated an almost identical ideology to that of *L'Ordre Nouveau*. Proclaiming the primacy of the spiritual, the necessity of undermining the current political order and of convincing conservative politicians to accept a more "leftist" orientation, *Esprit* called for a spiritual, personalist revolution to combat the disorder of the times.⁵⁴ *Esprit's* doctrine dealt with the status of the *personne*; it placed the person as the focus of the physical

⁵²D&R, 274. Berdyaev had already participated in a similar review in Russia. *Vekhi* ["Signposts"] (1909) was a response to the chaos which ensued in the 1905 revolution. It criticized the Russian intelligentsia's blind commitment to materialism and promoted the primacy of the spiritual in all things. The common goal of *Vekhi* was to enlighten the intelligentsia and urge them to seek legitimate, strong foundations for their ideology instead of being seduced by alienation and dogmatism. Should the intelligentsia follow *Vekhi's* suggestions, they would become the disciplined, spiritual, "artists"; an elite which could lead Russia to a successful revolution.

⁵³Until May, 1933, when *l'Ordre Nouveau* began its own review, its members regularly contributed to *Esprit*.

⁵⁴This plan was detailed in Mounier's article "Refaire la Renaissance." *Esprit* No. 1., (Oct., 1932), 5-52.

world and society. Apparently the most popular article in this issue was Berdyaev's "Vérité et mensonge du communisme" which briefly elaborated his constant belief that communism, although greatly flawed in theory and interpretation, exposed the basic truth that individualistic capitalism had degraded and enslaved humanity. The article also asserted that communism was a direct response to the insufficient application of Christianity: had Christians followed the doctrines of love and brotherhood, had they been responsible for the welfare of their brothers, communism would not have been necessary.⁵⁵ Mounier's last article, entitled "Chronique du Mouvement", elaborated *Esprit's* political stance: through a personalist revolution they would rejuvenate France's declining economy, replace exclusionist nationalism with beneficial patriotism, and reorganize France into a federation of autonomous *patries*.⁵⁶

In the 1930s, *Esprit* gained popularity while *L'Ordre Nouveau* suffered increasing fragmentation with the death of Dandieu (1933), radicalism, and the departure of Marc for the Midi in 1935. Although Marc continued to send articles to the review, the absence of his dynamic personality told greatly upon the popularity and financing of *L'Ordre Nouveau*. By 1938 the review closed for financial reasons and the group was disbanded.⁵⁷ *Esprit* enjoyed substantial popularity throughout the 1930s, and although forced to close during the period of German occupation, it was revived after the war.

⁵⁵Berdyaev, "Vérité et mensonge du communisme." *Esprit* No. 1., (Oct., 1932), 104-128. The commendation of Berdyaev's article appeared in André Gide's Journal in Jan, 4, 1933. [Loubet del Bayle, 139.]

⁵⁶Mounier, "Chronique du mouvement." *Esprit*. No. 1., (Oct., 1932), 129-137.

⁵⁷Loubet del Bayle, 117 - 120.

Through *Esprit* the vision of personalism would be carried on and developed into a politico-philosophic platform.

L'Ordre Nouveau and *Esprit* diverged in the mid-thirties. This was partially due to a personality difference between Mounier and Dandieu: Mounier found Dandieu's appearance affected and unpleasant: "Cheveux longs rejetés en arrière, face froide, sourire figé, gros verres de myope."⁵⁸ Moreover, the two men diverged over doctrine. Mounier viewed Dandieu's characterization of the person as too nietzschean; Dandieu viewed personalism as "une affirmation fondamentale de la puissance de création de la personne humaine", and Dandieu criticized Mounier for his lack of doctrinal rigour.⁵⁹ However, the actual rupture between the two groups occurred because of their different revolutionary tactics. Mounier led *Esprit* to a more Catholic, religious orientation, if *L'Ordre Nouveau* envisioned an elite group of young "knights" to lead its personalism, *Esprit* favoured young "monks". In June 1933, Mounier criticized *L'Ordre Nouveau* for their "anti-christianism".⁶⁰

This rift apparently did not affect the friendship between Marc and Mounier; Marc continued to contribute to *Esprit* (often under pseudonyms) and Mounier wrote a special note to Marc immediately after his condemnation of *L'Ordre Nouveau*:

⁵⁸Mounier, Mounier et sa génération: lettres, carnets, et inédits. (Paris, 1956)., 100-101.

⁵⁹Lipiansky, 18., "Dandieu reproached *Esprit* with a certain left-wing Catholic's virtuousness. Mounier reproached *L'Ordre Nouveau* with a peremptory tone, a certain sectarianism. [Denis de Rougemont as cited in Roy, 43.]

⁶⁰*Esprit*. No. 9. (June, 1933)., 311.

Je prie chaque jour le Père qu'Il nous garde de l'esprit Ordre Nouveau.
A part cela, nous sommes d'accord. Mais vous savez que j'aime bien la
meilleure moitié de vous-même, celle qu'ils n'ont pas ⁶¹

This link may be partially explained by Marc's conversion to Catholicism in 1933 motivated by a deathbed promise to Dandieu and Marc's final resolution of his religious doubts.

L'Ordre Nouveau, in turn, became increasingly committed to practical, immediate action; their "knights" required simple, precise principles which they could implement in concrete political and social change. They became impatient with *Esprit's* vague and often romantic policies.

De toutes les revues des années 1930, souligne Jean Touchard, c'est incontestablement *L'Ordre Nouveau* qui a fait le principal effort pour élaborer une doctrine d'action. *Esprit* pose généralement les problèmes en termes de civilisation plutôt qu'en termes de réformes applicables...*L'Ordre Nouveau* est, à proprement parler, la seule école de pensée des années 1930.⁶²

L'Ordre Nouveau insisted that to avoid the corruption of their ideas and to successfully carry out their personalist revolution, they had to elaborate as clear and precise a doctrine as possible. Although they could not delineate every change or policy which they hoped for, they did fear that a vague, generalized doctrine would be misinterpreted or ignored. It was their adherence to precisely this belief, their rigidity as expressed by terms such as "acte pur", "aggressivité créatrice, and "violence spirituelle" which offended Mounier and his fellow members at *Esprit*.

⁶¹An unpublished letter from Mounier to Marc, cited in Lipiansky, 19., footnote 2.

⁶²Lipiansky, 21.

Esprit also mistrusted *L'Ordre Nouveau*'s collaboration with the German youth groups and "rightist" French movements. At best they considered this action opportunistic. But after *L'Ordre Nouveau* published its "letter to Hitler"⁶³ in which they acknowledged the correct, as well as the erroneous aspects of Hitler's National Socialism, *Esprit* publicly announced their divorce from *L'Ordre Nouveau*.⁶⁴ In fact, Berdyaev warned Mounier in 1934, that *L'Ordre Nouveau* appeared to be becoming more oriented towards fascism and "technocratie petit-bourgeois".⁶⁵ Maritain also expressed his doubts about *Esprit*'s involvement with *L'Ordre Nouveau*, and after "letter to Hitler, he was the strongest advocate of the formal rupture."⁶⁶ Thus *L'Ordre Nouveau*'s rigidity and *Esprit*'s Christian orientation proved insurmountable stumbling blocks to their continued cooperation.

Mounier's caution and his emphasis on gradual teaching, communion, and change also caused his fellow founders to become disenchanted. In 1934, Izard formally established the *Troisième Force* as *Esprit*'s active cell. For a few months, *Esprit* supported this group and acknowledged the link, but as *Troisième Force* became involved in more violent demonstrations and moved further to the left, the ties between the two were abruptly severed.⁶⁷ Thus Mounier was left in charge of the review which had the

⁶³*L'Ordre Nouveau*. No. 5., (Nov., 1933.)

⁶⁴*Esprit*, no.16., (Jan. 1934)., *Esprit* feared that *L'Ordre Nouveau*'s commitment to the "knight" principle would lead them increasingly towards Nietzsche and fascism. [OE, 181.] See OE, 841. for Mounier's explanation of the rift.

⁶⁵Mounier, *Mounier et sa génération*, 174.

⁶⁶Amato, 109.

⁶⁷Mounier, "*Esprit* et les mouvements de jeunesse." OE., 841.

primary goal of searching for the Truth and saw as its active mission the education of young French people in the ideas of personalism, communality, and spirituality. Like monks, their main priority was to advance the re-spiritualization of humanity and preserve the knowledge of Truth.

French personalism was primarily elucidated by *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau*. It was a specifically 1930s movement coloured by the perceived disorder of these years: the world-wide depression, the increasing polarity between liberal democracies and anti-liberal, communal dictatorships, and the encroaching threats of fascism and communism. French personalism reflected France's reluctance to commit itself to any of these ideological positions. The movement's revolutionary stance reflected the *entre-deux-guerres* mentality: it was highly romantic, often pessimistic, and charged with uncertainty. Convinced that the past "truths" were erroneous, the French personalists wanted to create new truths, new people, and a new society.

The opinions of Alexandre Marc, Nikolai Berdyaev, and other Russian emigres persuaded the personalists that communism was not a satisfactory alternative. Reports from Italy and Germany, and the horrors of the Spanish Civil War produced similar doubts about fascism. Thus the French personalists espoused a "third way" which selectively amalgamated German Romanticism, a myriad of French philosophies from Neo-criticism to Thomism, and Russian populist philosophy. In short, any philosophy which championed the spiritual person as the centre of a communally organized society. The key concepts of French personalism were discipline, the acceptance of personal responsibility, the enshrinement of free will, and the end of personal isolation.

Chapter 2. Godmanhood: The Personalist Philosophy.

French personalism was a spiritual revolution: "La révolution sera morale ou elle ne sera pas".¹ Whether its proponents aspired to a re-christianization of Europe or simply to the acceptance of the spiritual nature of human beings, they all believed in the "primacy of the spiritual".² A personalist did not have to be religious or a Christian, he just had to accept that there were two existing universes - the material and the spiritual - and that human beings had become alienated from and needed to be reunited with the latter.³

In Russia, this concept had first been introduced by the Slavophiles. In 1856, the predominant Slavophile philosopher, Ivan Kireevsky, published "*O neobkhodimosti i vosmozhnosti novykh nachal d'lia filosofii* [On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy]."⁴ advocating the formation of a universal philosophy which

¹Péguy, cited in Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance, OE, 137. The Christian personalists used the word spiritual in its religious sense; they meant to effect a new supremacy of Christian principles over all material forms of organization through their spiritual revolution: "...Revolution and Christianity [were] to be inseparable: indeed, Christ was to be the very source of the Revolution." [Marc, "Le Christianisme et la Révolution spirituelle." *Esprit*. (March, 1933)., 958.] This was Marc's fictitious review of the non-existent Otto Neumann's Révolution des Geistes. Marc employed the fiction to avoid offending the non-Christian or agnostic members of *L'Ordre Nouveau*. [Roy, 45.]

²Marc, "Primauté de la personnalité." *Plans*, (April, 1932.); Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." *Esprit*. (Oct., 1932)., 5-50; George Izard "Destin du Spirituel." *Esprit* (Oct., 1932)., 137-141.

³"...l'homme réel, chair et esprit, participe à une double hierarchie; il appartient à la fois à un ordre matériel et à un ordre spirituel entre lesquels il établit une tension féconde sans qu'il puisse se soustraire à l'un ou à l'autre sans une grave mutilation." [Lipiansky, 45.]

⁴Ivan Kireevsky, "*O neobkhodimosti i vosmozhnosti novykh nachal d'lia filosofii*." Izbrannye stat'i. (Moscow, 1984.) 238-272.

would subsume Western rationalism to the spiritual principles of Orthodoxy.⁵ Kireevsky envisioned a universal brotherhood of men in which Russians - emotionally open and capable of love - would serve as the bridge between East and West; Russia would offer a cure to both the "grabbing individualism" of the West and the despotic anti-individualism of the East.⁶

His essay provides a unique description of Western Christian evolution. Kireevsky dated the origin of the European dichotomy between intellect and religion at the schism of the Christian Church which occurred at the fourth Nicean Council when the Pope was declared the "Vicar of Saint Peter" and a new doctrine was introduced. Kireevsky asserted that the original doctrine was the product of Divine Revelation as dictated by Christ. In changing this doctrine, the Roman Church allowed individual interpretations of Christ's teaching, and it destroyed the universality of Christian dogma. This initial breach ensured further fragmentation because if one man could change the dogma then

⁵Kireevsky's intellectual development was influenced by post-Enlightenment European philosophy and, in particular, by the German Romantics; of these, Kireevsky was most impressed by Schelling. He also received instruction from the monks of Optina Pustyn who were revitalizing the teachings of the Greek Patristic Fathers in a contemporary renewal of Orthodoxy. Kireevsky's major works were written after several years of study with these monks and his philosophy contained the very germs of Greek (and hence early Russian) theology. It is for this reason that one historian has asserted: "Slavophilism is not a patriotic perversion of German idealism, not even a reaction against modern European rationalism. It is simply and solely a modern continuation of a religious tradition which has been dominating Russian life since the time of Saint Vladimir, and which was temporarily driven into the underworld by the violent reforms of Peter the Great and his successors." [Henry Lanz, "The Philosophy of Ivan Kireyevsky." in The Slavonic and East European Review. (1926), 604.]

⁶Janko Lavrin, "Kireevsky and the Problem of Culture." in The Russian Review. (1961), 119.

I any man could. To prevent further fragmentation and to justify its authority, the Roman Church imposed a hierarchy: all Christians must believe whatever the Pope told them with "blind" faith.⁷ Such despotism did not succeed in stopping "heresies"; it simply made rebellion more dangerous, and thus more intense. Kireevsky regarded Protestantism as simply the most extensive heresy.

The Protestants reacted against all Catholic traditions. Believing that the Universal Church was dead, they returned to the only original source: the Gospel. Thus Protestant faith depended solely on a particular sect's interpretation of the Gospel. The result was a myriad of "truths", each one as valid as the next.⁸ Kireevsky applauded the rationale behind Protestantism, but noted that the resulting multitude of faiths was unsatisfactory: in a renewed attempt to establish the universal Truth, Europeans turned away from faith, to the Greek philosophy and "autonomous rational theory". For Kireevsky, Hegel represented the pinnacle of rational philosophy; having limited the ways to "know the Truth" to the "logical activity of the intellect in the detached contemplation of the natural world" man could not rise to any goal above that of his own self-interest.⁹ Rational philosophy, forced to accept each man's reason as the "self-consciousness of universal being", could not advance, nor could it provide satisfactory solutions for growing social

⁷Kireevsky, 241,242.

⁸Kireevsky, 243.

⁹Kireevsky, 246. This theory reappears in Berdyaev's philosophy; he asserted that "Knowledge means consecration into the mystery of being and of life. It is a light which springs from being and within it. Knowledge cannot create being out of itself, out of the idea, as Hegel thought. Religious revelation means that being reveals itself to the knower. [DM., 4.]

problems; it could only create external and artificial unity; it denied the sanctity of the person.¹⁰ Having reached this impasse, Europeans turned to the only remaining unifying mechanism: industry.

Industry rules the world without faith or poetry. In our time it unites and divides people. It determines one's fatherland; it delineates classes; it lies at the base of state structures; it moves nations, it declares war, makes peace, changes mores, gives direction to science, and determines the character of culture. Men bow down before it and erect temples to it. It is the real deity in which people sincerely believe and to which they submit...Incidentally we have not witnessed everything yet. One may say that we are seeing only the beginning of the unlimited domination of industry and of the recent phase of philosophy. Proceeding hand in hand, they have yet to run the full course of the modern development of European life. It is hard to see what European culture may come to if some sort of inner change does not occur among the European peoples.¹¹

Kireevsky believed that Russia could provide the example and the impetus to effect this necessary, inner change in Europe.

In Kireevsky's view, Russia had maintained the universal Christian doctrine (at least until before the reforms of Peter the Great) which was manifested socially in the *obshchina* and *artel'* and philosophically in the Orthodox Church. Unlike the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Christians refused to allow any reform or modification of church dogma.¹² This constancy allowed the Church total security in the face of science or

¹⁰"Private and social life in the West are based on the concept of an individual and separate independence that presupposes the isolation of the individual. Hence the external formal relations of private property and all types of legal conventions are sacred and of greater importance than human beings." [Ivan Kireevsky, cited in A. Walicki, A History of Russian Thought. (Stanford, 1979)., 94.]

¹¹Kireevsky, 263.

¹²"The sum total of all Christians of all ages, past and present, comprises one indivisible, eternal, living assembly of the faithful, held together as much by the unity of consciousness as through the communion of prayer." [Kireevsky, 266.]

rational thought: new ideas and principles simply left the realm of Church authority and became private opinion subject to the verdict of reason; the Orthodox Church had no need to require "blind" faith from its members. Instead faith served simultaneously as an "inner and an external conductor"; it was the "guiding star" for reason, it encouraged man to elevate his reason until it attained a level of "sympathetic agreement with faith"

The first condition for the elevation of reason is that man should work to gather into one indivisible whole all his separate forces, which in his ordinary condition are in a state of incompleteness and contradiction, that he should not consider his abstract logical capacity as the only organ for the comprehension of the truth; that he should not consider the voice of enraptured feeling, uncoordinated with other forces of the spirit as the infallible guide to truth; that he should not consider the urging of an isolated aesthetic sense, independent of other ideas as the true guide to the comprehension of the higher order of the universe; that he should not consider even the dominant love of his heart, separate from the other spiritual demands, as the infallible guide to the attainment of the supreme good; but that he should constantly look for, in the depth of his soul, that inner root of understanding where all the separate forces combine into one living and whole vision of the mind.¹³

By elevating and going beyond reason, man slowly attained an "integrated personality"

This development could not occur in isolation; it required the support and stimulation of a community. However, the integrated personality was not subsumed by the community; on the contrary, the elevation of reason to a corresponding level with faith and the merging of the person's natural and spiritual capacities, enhanced one's sense of unique integrity [*tsel'nost'*].

Such integrity elevates man's very manner of thought and, while humbling his rational conceit, does not constrain the freedom of his natural reason. Rather, inner consciousness strengthens his independence and at the same

¹³Kireevsky, 267,268.

time willingly subordinates it to faith.¹⁴

With the help of others in the community and with a constant pursuance of such *tsel'nost'*, the person would become a complete entity able to fulfil his entire potential. This system was the cornerstone of Kireevsky's *Weltanschauung*. As reason aspired to the level of faith, so would rationalistic Europe aspire to the integrated Christian order still existing among the *narod* in Russia.

Dostoevsky and Soloviev furthered the primacy of the spiritual. Dostoevsky was both influenced by the Slavophile philosophy and reacting against the increasing appeal of materialist ethics in Russia. He despised Chernyshevsky's conception of people as "rational egoists" and found the Nihilist altruism illogical.¹⁵ Dostoevsky's polemic went against the relegation of all human motivations to the realm of reason. He insisted that reason only fulfils man's intellectual capacity, while free will is "a manifestation of the whole of life": "...human nature acts as a complete entity, with all that is in it, consciously

¹⁴Kireevsky, 268.

¹⁵Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889) was educated, not in the German Romantic tradition, but rather in the Materialists like Feuerbach and Mill and in Comtean positivism. Chernyshevsky regarded people as "rational egoists"; the person was simply a "complex chemical compound, governed strictly by the laws of causality". [RP2, 8] Thus egoism was neither good nor bad, it merely reflected the social environment in which it existed. Having refuted the concept of personal responsibility, Chernyshevsky was able to release his "new men" - best described in his influential novel What is to be Done? (1863) - from the stricture of law and humane ethics. His hero, Rakhmetov, was a born conspirator, physically tough (he slept on a bed of nails), and he acted in opposition to all societal norms; he personified Nihilism. Yet, Chernyshevsky's own idealism led him to assert that "rational egoists" like Rakhmetov were guided by "self-interest" to devote their whole lives to the betterment of the masses. [Chernyshevsky, "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" Selected Philosophical Essays. (Westport, CT., 1981)., 49-135.]

or unconsciously; and though it may be wrong, it's nevertheless alive."¹⁶ Utterly rejecting Chernyshevsky's theories, Dostoevsky asserted that both "egotistical freedom and mechanistic collectives [were] dead ends" precisely because they denied the spiritual essence of human beings.¹⁷

Soloviev elevated the concept of the integral, spiritual person to its apogee in his philosophy of *Godmanhood*. Only through the bonding of reason and faith could the human being become a true link between God and created matter, become the "God-man":

"Reason", is a *formal principle*, it has no independent access to reality. It is, as it were, *essentially abstract*, i.e., precisely *detached* from reality, i.e., from the being....On the contrary, "faith" is precisely an insight into existence. It touches reality even if it cannot, by itself, give an account of what it possesses.¹⁸

This view of the tension between faith and reason is strikingly similar to Kireevsky's "integral personality". Intellect - the "man" component of the personality - triggers the will to fully understand all things, but complete understanding can only be achieved when one utilizes faith: the "God" component. Or as Kireevsky stated, reason must elevate itself to a level of agreement with faith for any true understanding

¹⁶Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground (Toronto, 1981), 31.

¹⁷Donald Fanger, "Introduction," Notes from Underground By Dostoevsky.

"Making man responsible, Christianity *eo ipso* also recognizes his freedom. However, making man dependent on any error in the social organization, the environmental doctrine reduces man to absolute impersonality, to a total emancipation from all personal moral duty, from all independence, reduces him to a state of the most miserable slavery that can be conceived." [Dostoevsky, cited in Stuart Tompkins, "*Vekhi* and the Russian Intelligentsia" Canadian Slavonic Papers, (1957), 13]

¹⁸George Florovsky, "Reason and Faith in the Philosophy of Solov'ev" in E. Simmons, Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, (Cambridge, 1955), 286.

In 1909, *Vekhi* translated this Russian tradition into a widely publicized, political ideal: the authors of *Vekhi* insisted that everything - humanity, economics, politics, culture, and society - must be subsumed to the spiritual for *any* true unity and progress to occur: "Their [*Vekhi*'s] common platform is a recognition of the theoretical and practical primacy of spiritual life over the external forms of community.." ¹⁹ The manifestos of *L'Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit* likewise called for a recognition of "la primauté du spirituel"; *Esprit* insisted that, "Le spirituel commande le politique et l'économique. L'esprit doit garder l'initiative et la maîtrise de ses buts, qui vont à l'homme pardessus l'homme, et non pas au bien-être." ²⁰

Just as the concept of spirit is indefinable in rational terms, so too is the concept of personality. Berdyaev called it a "value", or the "posing of a question", rather than "a case of ready-made datum". ²¹ The greatest attainment of personalism would occur through the enrichment and aspiration to wholeness in each person, but the person must first exist. "Personality is at the beginning of the road and it is only at the end of the road." ²² In linear terms, the personality was the *alpha* and the *omega*, a united whole which could not be subdivided into its components; it could only be perceived at the

¹⁹Gershenzon, "Foreword." *Vekhi.*, 156.

²⁰Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 142.

²¹S&F., 23.

²²S&F., 23.

moment of its conception and at the moment of its death.²³

Personality creates itself and exists by its own destiny, finding the source of its strength in an existence which surpasses it. Personality is potentially the universal, but quite certainly a distinct, unrepeatable, irreplaceable being with a unique form.²⁴

It is here that Berdyaev moved beyond Kireevsky. The person was not realized out of the mingling of parts or the unification of all elements within the spiritual principle; the person was a "primary whole".

Accepting Berdyaev's definition, French personalism made its nucleus the person, it did not begin with the group, the race, or the society. Marc acted as the primary conduit of this idea: well-versed in the Russian populist ideology, he accepted Belinsky's theory that the human being is preeminent to all institutions or ideas, and Herzen's assertion that the death of one person is as devastating as the end of humanity.²⁵ He was also familiar with Peter Lavrov's (1823-1900) subjective method:

1) Man has the right to judge everything from his own point of view and to protest the "objective laws of history"; in fact he is obliged to protest human

²³This idea was reflected in *l'Ordre Nouveau's* assertion that the person would be the beginning, the end, and the means of their revolution. [Lipiansky, 47.] Marc also received this idea from the German psychologist Stern who, like Berdyaev, denied the objectification of the person; he saw in personality an indivisible "*konkrete, zieltätige Ganzheit*". Marc's continued loyalty to Stern is evidenced by his 1933 article in *Revue d'Allemagne* "Le 'personnalisme' de William Stern et la jeunesse française". [Roy, 15.]

²⁴S&F, 23.

²⁵This sentiment was expressed most vehemently by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* (London, 1958.): "...imagine that it is you yourself who are erecting the edifice of human destiny with the aim of making men happy in the end, of giving them peace and contentment at last, but to do that it is absolutely necessary, and indeed quite inevitable, to torture to death only one tiny creature, the little girl who beat her breast with her little fist, and to found the edifice on her unavenged tears - would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me and do not lie!" [287]

suffering even if he has no hope of succeeding.

2) All "science" is coloured by the observer's background, experience, and social position; thus "objective knowledge" is impossible.

3) Human will can effectively influence the course of history.²⁶

Lavrov's theory not only contradicted the deterministic schools of Hegel and Marx, but it also denied the environmentalist determinism of Nihilism. To the majority of the Russian intelligentsia, Lavrov offered a concrete and *responsible* way to alter the course of Russian history and to repay their debt to the *narod*. He inspired the idea that if one did not serve society, one was a *kulturnyi dikar'*, (cultural savage).²⁷ Marc carried this idea to the French personalists²⁸

Thus French personalism, like the Russian religious philosophy, was particular, not general, in its approach; *L'Ordre Nouveau* placed the person as the "start", the "end" and

²⁶Walicki, 238

²⁷This sentiment was emphasized by Ogarev, Herzen's life-long friend and collaborator on Kolokol:

"Every rich man, every noble who enters the temple of learning which is closed for the poor and the non-noble would feel that he was a wretch...Let them close the universities, this will not make genuine learning perish. Let the young men of the universities scatter through the provinces. Any man worth anything will carry learning with him wherever he goes. Not government learning whose aim is tuition; but vital learning, whose purpose is the education of the people. This learning is universal and knows no distinction of class. We need travelling teachers. The apostles of learning, like those of religion, cannot stay put, shutting themselves up in chapels specially built for them. Their cause is called preaching, their place is everywhere. At first they did not exist, but now, without wanting to, the government has created them. Take advantage of this; do not go to the universities. Let them close; university youth spread throughout Russia will act as a unifying agent between the various classes. To become a free man it is essential to go to the people."

[Ogarev, Kolokol Jan. 15, 1862, Kolokol (1857-1867). Vol. V. (Moscow, 1962.), 1002.]

²⁸Marc, Diary, June 16-July 2, 1919.

the "means" of their future society.²⁹ The Russian philosophies since Kireevsky had founded their systems upon the integral personality, and had insisted that, "the inner life of the personality is the sole creative force of human existence and that this inner life, and not the self-sufficient principles of the political sphere, is the only solid basis on which society can be built."³⁰ Berdyaev explained that his participation in *Esprit* was motivated by the French personalist adherence to that same principle.³¹ Accordingly, the personalist revolution was an incarnation of the idea that spiritually conscious people could carry out the beneficial reorganization of society and overcome the current problems of atomization, poverty, violence, and despair

Une civilisation nouvelle, un homme nouveau: nous risquons plus à diminuer l'ambition qu'à l'embasser un peu au-dessus de notre atteinte. Nous savons bien que chaque âge ne réalise une oeuvre à peu près humaine que s'il a d'abord écouté l'appel surhumain de l'histoire. Notre but lointain reste celui que nous nous assignions en 1932: après quatre siècles d'erreurs, patiemment, collectivement, *refaire la Renaissance*.³²

In this, they adopted the broad outlines of Berdyaev's "New Middle Ages" and Maritain's call for a "Second Renaissance". The French personalists envisioned themselves as the "knight-monks" who would lead this revolution. The diverse personalities of the members of the movement resulted in a variety of interpretations of what a revolutionary was: *L'Ordre Nouveau* tended to embrace a more secular, active warrior vision; as "knights" they used their intelligence as an "épée" to disperse the illusions of the current order, and

²⁹Lipiansky, 47.

³⁰Gershenzon, "Foreword." *Vekhi.*, 156.

³¹D&R, 274.

³²Mounier, "Manifeste au Service du Personnalisme" OE, 488.

they wanted to form a new "Chevalerie" that would combat injustice and spread personalism.³³ The Catholic majority in *Esprit* were more inclined toward Maritain's vision of a Christian order.

C'est dire qu'au lieu d'être groupée et rassemblée comme au moyen âge, dans un corps de civilisation homogène et intégralement chrétienne, mais limitée à une portion privilégiée de la terre habitée, il semble que l'unité de la culture chrétienne doive s'étendre maintenant sur toute la surface du globe, mais ne plus représenter en revanche que l'ordre et le réseau vivant des institutions temporelles chrétiennes et des foyers chrétiens de vie intellectuelle et spirituelle répandus parmi les nations dans la grande unité supra-culturelle de l'Église. Au lieu d'un château-fort dressé au milieu des terres, il faudrait penser plutôt à l'armée des étoiles jetées dans le ciel.³⁴

Thus, although the French personalists did not accept Berdyaev's entire philosophy,³⁵ they were extremely attracted to his medieval symbols - the monk, the knight, and the saint - and they agreed with his dream of a New Middle Ages.

The central component of Berdyaev's New Middle Ages is the personality: the God-man. His "third way" is a socio-political philosophy based not upon the individual, nor the society, but upon the *person*. In order to fully understand this, we must now delve into Berdyaev's interpretation of personalism. The first and most essential concept is that

³³Lipiansky, 48, 71.

³⁴Jacques & Raissa Maritain, Oeuvres complètes, Vol. IV, (Fribourg, 1982), 94.

³⁵"...even though he [Berdyaev] had quite a following of French Catholic youth, he felt a great difference between them and himself. Nicolai Alexandrovitch realized with regret that these young people did not appreciate what he considered his deepest themes: "uncreated freedom, God's need for human creativity, objectivisation, the priority of personality and its tragic conflict with society and world order." He observed that they would usually avoid these topics in talking with him, "lest the difference between us be intensified". [Donald Lowrie, Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nikolai Berdyaev. (New York, 1960), 200.]

of two coexisting, but never externally interacting worlds: the natural and the spiritual. Nature is manifested in all matter: it is the world of tangible conglomerations of atoms. In human beings, the body, mind, and soul are all composed of similar but distinct materials which, when combined, constitute the individual. Thus humans, in nature, are "the offspring of the world and of the processes which take place in the world"³⁶. Spirit "belongs to another order of reality and to a different scheme of things", it is not manifested in "things", in matter, but rather it is "life, experience, destiny".³⁷ In people, the spirit can only be known through experience, and that experience occurs as a fulfilment of the spirit's destiny: "Everything that takes place in the spiritual world takes place in me."³⁸ The manifestation of the spirit in people is the personality.

³⁶S&F, 21.

³⁷FS, 8. "Spiritual life is not the reflection of any other reality whatsoever, it is reality itself....Spirit is real existence, and spiritual life does in fact appear and manifest itself. It is a basic fact which can be undeniably established but which cannot be proved. Spiritual experience is the greatest reality in human life. The divine is manifested in it, but its existence cannot be demonstrated. God and His divinity, spirit and the spiritual, are given to us in the experience of life; they reveal themselves but they cannot be established by ratiocination." [FS., 11.]

³⁸FS, 9. Alexandre Marc reached the same conclusion through his study of Russian and European philosophy: "if consciousness does not have a separate personality [is only a physical trait] then what is it? Consciousness is this: the only separate link with personality (liaison special de qualités dormées)." [Diary, July 17, 1921.] Marc found that science and rationalism could not explain all things in life, nor all aspects of humanity. Thus he imagined a new approach to philosophy: the variety of philosophical systems proved to him that each system was subjective and relative, relativity existed in "general humanity's knowledge". But the fact that this relativity existed was not a sufficient reason to "reject the discoveries of new relative truths and the construction of new philosophical systems". His goal was to espouse the new systems which most closely approached "human-objectification" or were human-centred. He noted that the source of such systems was solely human experience - both spiritual and material experience - and therefore "fundamental new homo-objective philosophy must manifest *integral experience*". [Diary, Aug. 6, 1921.]

Berdyaev was pleasantly surprised that the German sociologist Max Scheler was able to reach a similar conclusion through biological studies. Scheler also believed that "man is human only as the bearer of spirit which manifests itself in personality. Man is a being who transcends himself and the world."³⁹ Thus Berdyaev and Scheler both perceived the existence of a different reality which transcended the static three-dimensional, rational world. Their spiritual world broke through into the natural world each time a *person* entered that world. This occurred, not at the moment of birth - from birth only an individual emerges - but when a human being developed a personality: "Personality is a microcosm, a complete universe. It is personality alone that can bring together a universal content and be a potential universe in an individual form."⁴⁰

Marc was also influenced by Scheler's ideas. He had remained in Germany to study philosophy at the University of Jena (1923) and the University of Freiburg (1924). Amid the many philosophers whom he studied at this time, two stand out as dominant influences for his later personalism: Scheler, and the psychologist William Stern.⁴¹ Scheler's system of advancing organic communities which culminated in the *Gesamtperson* - a community of "interlocking love relationships which taken together presented the same characteristics as a single person"⁴² - was consistent with the Russian populist view of the *sobornost'* with which Marc was already familiar. Marc thus added

³⁹DM., 48.

⁴⁰S&F., 21.

⁴¹Roy, 13-15.

⁴²Kelly, 50.

Scheler's system into his ideology; he accepted "detours" (Scheler) as the "savage's" first leap out of tribal monism into complex dualism in which,

...man arrives at the idea about the existence of a spiritual reality, in opposition to the preceding [the purely materialist reality]. This idea gives him confidence in the intimate bond of these elements at first, and then takes him to the idea about the predominance and even about the preeminence of spiritual life.⁴³

Berdyaev maintained that personality "must construct itself, enrich itself, till itself with universal content, achieve unity in wholeness in the whole extent of its life".⁴⁴ He again found himself in agreement with Scheler: "man is a being who transcends himself and the whole of life. the refined soul needs a stern spirit to give it eternal worth and to hold it together in wholeness and unity".⁴⁵ However, they diverged over the position of the personality within society.

But Scheler is wrong in saying that personality is self-contained. He maintains this in order to defend the faith in God as a Person, but he is mistaken. Personality from its very nature presupposes another - not the "not-self" which is a negative limit, but another person. Personality is impossible without love and sacrifice, without passing over to the other, to the friend, to the loved one. A self-contained personality becomes disintegrated. Personality is not the absolute, and God as the Absolute is not a Person. God as a Person presupposes His other, another Person, and is love and sacrifice. The Person of the Father presupposes the Persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is a Trinity of Persons just because they presuppose one another and imply mutual love and intercommunion.⁴⁶

Berdyaev was careful to maintain this distinction: personality is not determined by

⁴³Marc, "Diary.", Aug.7, 1921.

⁴⁴S&F, 23.

⁴⁵DM., 56.

⁴⁶DM, 57.

society, nor is it, in totality, society. However personality can "realize its own fullness only in communion with other personalities" (*sobornost'*).⁴⁷

Spiritual life did not exist as a punctuated, or unique event; it consisted of a continual process of realization through all personalities. To know the spiritual world, the human being must "join himself to all those who have participated in the development of the knowledge of spirit in history".⁴⁸

This "sobornost" is something completely outside the sphere of psychology and metaphysical spiritualism, for it is a genuine spiritual culture. The lives of the saints, the great creative efforts of the pioneers of religion, and the great thinkers and artists which constitute the monuments of man's spiritual life, are of infinitely greater importance than the deductions of purely abstract thinking. The spiritual life has been manifested in a real and concrete form in the spiritual experience of humanity, and it has bequeathed to us innumerable evidences of its creative energy. Here we have, not a manifestation of nature, but rather a manifestation of spirit. The profound intuition of religious tradition consists precisely in its having discovered the spiritual life not in external nature or in abstract thought but in "sobornost".⁴⁹

His commitment to *sobornost'* explains the inherently socialistic character of Berdyaev's New Middle Ages. If the ultimate importance of each personality is to be acknowledged, if "everyone is responsible for everyone else", and if all persons are interconnected, then "guaranteeing the right to labor and to a decent living..., social legislation to prevent the exploitation of man by man, is a logical result of this theory of personality".⁵⁰

This element of Berdyaev's philosophy was adopted almost verbatim from

⁴⁷Berdyaev, "Marx versus Man", in RP3., 157.

⁴⁸FS., 19.

⁴⁹FS, 20.

⁵⁰Berdyaev, "Marx versus Man" in RP3., 157.

Soloviev who insisted that the divisive and oppressive state of humanity was due to the increasing negation of the "God" principle. Soloviev believed that once people accepted that they were spiritual, as well as natural beings they could no longer indulge in materialist egoism which saw only the self as the centre of life and made all other people insignificant. The isolated individual was a mere caricature of the potential person he could become. Thus Godmanhood mandated the reunification of people and invested an infinite value in each person:

...man may be "all" only *together with others*; only together with others can he realize his absolute significance and become an inseparable and irreplaceable part of the universal whole, an independent, unique, and living organ of the absolute life. True individuality is a certain definite form of universal unity, a certain definite way of apprehending and assimilating the whole. In affirming himself outside of all else, man robs his own existence of its meaning, deprives himself of the true content of life, and reduces his individuality to an empty form.⁵¹

To further distinguish between the commonly interchangeable words "person" and "individual", Berdyaev asserted that while all humans are individuals, some are not persons.

We say of one man that he is a personality, and of another that he is not, although both are individuals. Sometimes a psychologically and biologically remarkable individual may be devoid of personality. Personality is a wholeness and unity possessing absolute and eternal worth.⁵²

This was a potentially discriminatory concept and illuminated the dark-side of Berdyaev's New Middle Ages. In a potentially dynamic, but also divided society there would be

⁵¹Soloviev, The Meaning of Love, (London, 1945), 24.

⁵²DM., 55.

persons and individuals. Individuals might become persons with proper teaching and exposure to the spiritual principle, but they also might remain as the disenfranchised "democratic" workers controlled by the personalist aristocracy.

The quest of the Kingdom of God alone can lead to victory. The ennobling of society, that is to say, its permeation by a spiritual aristocracy, ought to be at least on a level with its democratization; the new society will be a society of workers, and it must have an aristocratic principle.⁵³

Yet the personalists accepted Berdyaev's aristocracy. Marc had come to a similar resolution soon after the Russian Revolution. He had been disturbed by Bulgakov's assertion that whenever two activists collide, each aspires to be master over the other. Marc decided that it was as important to be able to follow as it was to lead; he was not prepared to be a demagogue.⁵⁴ But he also believed that an intellectual aristocracy was essential to progress, as his "personalism" demanded, one person could change history and an elite could affect the society around it.⁵⁵ Marc did not accept the levelling-down principle of socialism, but rather agreed with Dostoevsky: as long as the majority did not "aspire to true ableness and superiority", but were governed by "envy, pride, and other such feelings", then the minority, an elite was required to "command with words brotherly

⁵³C&C, 108.

⁵⁴Marc, "Diary.", April 20, 1918.

⁵⁵"Faith in one's calling is a great thing. That one, who believes in himself, in his own star, fearlessly and realistically; if he does not cut fatal doubt which knaws at his heart from his own soul, he declines in minutes. He walks, lifts his eyes and sweeps past obstacles on his path. His whole nature does not know falseness and repentance. And to him, not understanding greatness is foreign, a horrifying thing which splits the personality. And these words resound from such a man: 'If you believe in God then he is, if you don't believe then he isn't'." [Diary., April, 26, 1918.]

love, clean ideals, and the aspiration to all that is essential on earth" ⁵⁶

Moreover, the French personalists recognized the potential confusion generated by their terminology. In order to discriminate precisely between any human being and the spiritual, integral entity, the word "person" was selected. Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont were the first to suggest this. They realized that an inherent contradiction lay in Dandieu's and Robert Aron's original choice of *individu* to characterize the complete human being in opposition to the materialist individual ⁵⁷. Individualism may mean: "the liberation of the individual from natural and social pressures, and the exercise of independent and original judgment rather than stereotyped conformity to customs and conventions."⁵⁸ Personalists had no quarrel with this definition. However, it can also mean:

...a system of morals, feelings, ideas and institutions in which individuals can be organized by their mutual isolation and defense. Man in the abstract, unattached to any natural community, the sovereign lord of a liberty unlimited and undirected; turning towards others with a primary mistrust, calculation and self-vindication, institutions restricted to the assurance that these egoisms should not encroach upon one another, or to their betterment as a purely profit making association. ⁵⁹

This interpretation was what personalists fought against, it was their "dearest enemy" ⁶⁰

⁵⁶Diary, June, 28, 1918

⁵⁷Lipiansky, 43 (Footnote, 5.)

⁵⁸Faud Nucho, Berdyayev's Philosophy, (London, 1967), 91.

⁵⁹Mounier, Personalism, 18,19

⁶⁰The word "person" not only avoided the materialist, atomized characterization, it was also the most correct translation of the Russian word *lichnost'* (human being). *Lichnost'* evolved out of the word *litso*, meaning human face, and signified both the external body and the internal soul or spirit. It can be translated simultaneously as

The personalists' concern with exact terminology was a product of their ideological position. Opposed to both communism and materialist individualism, they were committed to a "third way", and they were extremely careful in their delineation of this position. The political atmosphere in France was so volatile that any group which opposed communism was immediately labelled fascist or reactionary, and any group which opposed the then current order was labelled Stalinist. Berdyaev was already familiar with this type of scenario: pre-revolutionary Russia suffered the same political polarity.⁶¹

Not only did the French personalists concur with Berdyaev's delineation

"personality", "individual", or "person" but it describes the entire characteristics, spiritual, physical, and mental which constitute each human being's unique identity. Incidentally, the Russians adopted the western word "individualism" in the eighteenth century - *individualnost* - as a foreign and commonly derogative term for a particular type of human being who exhibited extreme egoism and petty bourgeois traits. Thus for reasons of precision, and perhaps because of linguistic interpretations, Marc insisted upon the use of the word "person" to define the central force in his revolution.

⁶¹Berdyaev's experience and careful elucidation of the difference between the three paths - communism, individualism, and personalism - led the French personalists to adopt his explanation of communism:

"Briefly, Berdyaev's position was that communism was a religion which set itself to replace the christian [*sic*] religion. Owing its success to the failure of christians [*sic*], Berdyaev suggested, it proposed a messianic appeal to the soul of the masses, and an ethic of devotion. Philosophically, he argued, it was based on rigid economic determinism, denying the importance of ideological, spiritual, or cultural activities and offering a secular equivalent for all the powerful 'myths' of christianity [*sic*]. The truth of marxism lay, he said, in its critique of the exploiting capitalist system, of formal democracy, of nationalism, and in its determination to ally theory and practice to build a new world. The lie which outweighed these truths, he insisted, was the denial of God and therefore of man, the deification of society and the proletariat in particular, in short, its materialist collectivism. Berdyaev held that the strength of communism lay in the fact that it contained truths mixed with error. The best tactic, therefore, he argued, would be to admit the true parts while rejecting the errors, rather than merely attacking the whole of it. Berdyaev's analysis, adopted by Mounier, became a classic statement of *Esprit's* position on marxism and lies at the root of its often complex and widely criticised relations with French communism." [Kelly, 36.]

of the personality, but they also accepted his conception of the personality's role in society. Berdyaev again diverged from Scheler in the matter of how personality was realized on earth: Scheler believed that once the person formed, the individual touched the spirit world, that spirit remained wholly passive.⁶² Berdyaev, on the contrary, applied his central *Weltanschauung* of creativity: personality is only realized in creative acts, in free and active participation of the spirit in the natural world.⁶³ As God had created the world and humans in a free and creative act, so too must personalities, as "the image and likeness of God", create:

Personality in man is the triumph over the determination of the social group. Personality is not a substance but an act, a creative act. Every act is a creative act: a non-creative act is passivity. Personalism is activity, opposition, victory over the dragging burden of the world, the triumph of freedom over the world's slavery. The fear of exertion is harmful to the realization of personality. Personality is effort and conflict, the conquest of self and of the world, victory over slavery; it is emancipation....Personality is my whole thinking, my whole willing, my whole feeling, my whole creative activity.⁶⁴

Among his contemporaries, Berdyaev believed that prophets, doctors of the Church, religious and social reformers, and philosophers, in short all spiritually-guided creators, were best able to become personalities, and would form his aristocracy for the New Middle Ages.⁶⁵ Berdyaev dreamt about a return to the cult of the *belle-dame*, to knights, monks, and *troubadours*. He desired the end of the atomism of the modern

⁶²DM, 48.

⁶³DM, 48.

⁶⁴S&F., 24, 25.

⁶⁵C&C., 92.

world.

The New Middle Ages, like the old, is hierarchical in structure, whereas modern history everywhere repudiates such an organization. Man is not a unit in the universe, forming part of an irrational machine, but a living member of an organic hierarchy, belonging to a real and living whole. The very idea of personality is bound up with hierarchy, while "atomism" destroys its fundamental character.⁶⁶

However, events proved to Berdyaev the danger of any hierarchy, be it organic or not. World War Two, the Vichy Regime and the revelation of Nazi-war crimes illustrated the tenuous difference between a hierarchy of more and less advanced persons, and a hierarchy in which the lower orders, the non-persons, are denied all sanctity and life. Thus, in his last work Dream and Reality (1948) he repudiated his earlier faith in hierarchies:

The sense of the hierarchic order is bound up with a sense of belonging to some whole, whether social or cosmic or theo-cosmic, in which each person occupies an allotted place and is subordinated to the higher stage in the hierarchic structure. The value of the human person is, accordingly, seen as determined by the whole, the general, of which he constitutes a part. **I could scarcely envision any more striking example of anti-personalism than this conception.**⁶⁷

(My emphasis)

He had seen in Vichy France and Nazi Germany, the abuse of his ideas by racists, power-mongers, and bigots. Yet implicit in his philosophy lay the potential for discrimination, insofar as he believed in an aristocracy, made personalism an elite progression, and placed his faith in the purity and incorruptibility of the spiritual principle. Although Berdyaev's works describe many examples of the abuse of the Christian principle, he failed to guard

⁶⁶NMA., 109, 110.

⁶⁷D&R., 309.

against similar misinterpretations of his own thought. In his opposition to the current order and to the alternative of communism, he encouraged an elite - spiritual, personalist "supermen" - who ranked highest in his "organic" hierarchy.

Through the use of Berdyaev's Medieval symbols, the French personalists demonstrated their allegiance to his eliuist ideas; they also accepted the Russian principle of *Godmanhood* or the "integral personality" For the personalist revolutionaries, reason would not be denigrated by the spiritual element; rather their faith would liberate and elevate their reason: "L'homme est inséré, entouré, dominé, il n'est qu'un part, un élu de la réalité spirituelle; il n'emprisonne pas l'esprit, il est dévouement à l'esprit" ⁶⁸ Essentially, the French personalists accepted Berdyaev's and Scheler's philosophical definition of the person. A complete entity, the person was not some amalgamation that could be broken down into its constituent parts, nor a tangible area with determinable boundaries; the person was simply the *entire* volume of the human being in which the mental and physical faculties were elevated and improved by the spiritual dimension ⁶⁹ Mind, body and soul were a composite that existed in two planes, the wholly material and the wholly spiritual. If this composite aspired to the material level then it became "the flesh"; ⁷⁰ if it aspired to God (or to the spiritual reality for agnostics), it became the person. Although the French personalists accepted that humanity had not yet created the personal universe, they asserted that "its progressive conquest is the essential history of

⁶⁸Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 153.

⁶⁹Mounier, "Révolution personnaliste." OE, 178.

⁷⁰This is the Christian term for the lower, primal side of people, as in "the flesh is weak". [Mounier, Personalism, 4.]

mankind".⁷¹

Creating a neat parallel, *Esprit* asserted that the spiritual world, like the material world, was organized into three dimensions: the material dimensions - length, width and breadth - corresponded to the trilogy of Christian spiritual dimensions - vocation, incarnation and communion. The first step in discovering one's person lay in accepting that vocation:

Ma personne est en moi la présence et l'unité d'une vocation intemporelle, qui m'appelle à me dépasser indéfiniment moi-même, et opère, à travers la matière qui la réfracte, une unification toujours imparfaite, toujours recommencée, des éléments qui s'agitent en moi.⁷²

Vocation would be realized through experience, meditation, and the educational aid of the "knight-monks" who had already discovered at least some elements of his/her own person; it provided each human being with their purpose in life.⁷³ Vocation would then give the person strength to begin *l'engagement*: the study and recognition of one's own incarnation. This stage was essential to the elevation beyond the individual because only when the person realized that he was unique, indivisible, and eternally incarnate would he be able to enter into true communion - *sobornost'* - with other persons. Once these three lessons had been learned, the human being became a person who fully accepted a

⁷¹ "...none, not even the most elementary [philosophical approach], can be understood apart from the values and systems and vicissitudes of that personal universe which is the immanent goal of every human spirit and of the whole travail of nature." [Mounier, Personalism. 8, 9.]

⁷² Mounier, "Révolution personnaliste." OE., 178.

⁷³ Denis de Rougemont, Politique de la Personne, (Paris, 1934), 161.

life of self-sacrifice for others and continually developed his/her personal abilities ⁷⁴

Although the French personalists never accepted in totality Berdyaev's theory of creativity, they did agree that the spiritual side of the person was active; Scheler's passive spirit found little appeal among these future "knight-monks" *L'Ordre Nouveau* was most committed to the active principle; embracing Berdyaev's term, the "creative personality", they defined themselves accordingly

Aux chevaliers, aux terroristes, nous avons emprunté la conviction que des actions limitées peuvent avoir une valeur, qui moralement les dépasse, et qui peut contrebalancer, pour celui qui les accomplit, la pression d'un monde injuste. Mais notre tactique s'avère plus complète et plus efficace que la leur, en ce que, dépouillée de toute résignation et de tout ascétisme stérile, nos actes doivent porter en eux le germe d'un renouveau total ⁷⁵

Mounier, despite his condemnation of *L'Ordre Nouveau*'s approach, also enshrined the principle of action: "Do what you will, it matters not what, so long as your action is intense and you are vigilant about its consequences" ⁷⁶ The personalists believed "that the meditation of a single man...can move humanity more effectively than do the architects of reform." ⁷⁷ On a social level, their goal was to encourage all individuals to elevate themselves to the level of the person through education, writings, and other forms of art. They were "mystics and prophets"

On ne reconstruit pas la vérité avec des morceaux de mensonge et une
absolution. On refond par le feu ce qu'a pénétré le mensonge. Une

⁷⁴Mounier, "Révolution personaliste." OE., 179.

⁷⁵"Esquisse d'une méthode d'action révolutionnaire." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1935), 1198.

⁷⁶Mounier, Personalism, 85.

⁷⁷Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 138.

transfiguration dans la masse de toutes nos valeurs doit précéder leur réintégration universelle dans l'esprit. C'est cela, être révolutionnaire.⁷⁸

Thus, these "knight-monks" were disciplined seekers of truth who accepted the full responsibility of exposing the dangers and problems in the world, and of educating the people to become healthy, productive, supportive *persons*.

Perhaps it is not surprising that neither group devoted much attention to the possible misinterpretation of their movement. Like Berdyaev, they were convinced that the spiritual nature of their ideas would prevent their perversion. Mounier believed that *Esprit's* open and communal approach to policy would eliminate subjective and erroneous applications of their ideas.⁷⁹ Yet despite *L'Ordre Nouveau's* adherence to exactly the same principle, *Esprit* accused them of perversion and of embracing proto-fascist, nietzschean impulses.⁸⁰ *L'Ordre Nouveau* placed more emphasis upon "spiritual vigilance" to maintain the purity of their revolution.⁸¹ Beyond these rather vague safeguards, both groups seemingly relied on fate and the righteousness of their cause to justify their action and keep it authentic.

In response to accusations that personalism was impractical, utopian dreaming, both groups insisted that they were not espousing a "heaven on earth". *L'Ordre Nouveau* argued that personalism was possible because it was not a social, but a personal change

⁷⁸Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE, 148.

⁷⁹Mounier, Personalism., 74,75.

⁸⁰Mounier, "*Esprit* et les mouvements de jeunesse." OE, 841.

⁸¹"Question tactiques." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Jan. 1935). 1040-1049.

that existed "déjà chaque fois qu'un homme devient personnel" ⁸² The social parameters of their revolution could therefore only be defined when enough persons were developed to effect the concrete changes. To provide a specific, complete blueprint of their new order would deprive persons of their freedom and role in creating their own "personalities of persons" [*patries*]⁸³ *Esprit* followed this same general line and insisted that human beings must liberate themselves and create their own new realities ⁸⁴ However, they also suggested that their critics were "blinded" by the complex truth and the "radiant light" of their mission.

Nous partons sur un chemin où nous savons que jamais nous ne serons désœuvrés, jamais désespérés — notre oeuvre est par-delà le succès, notre espérance par-delà les espoirs — Voyez à Bruges *Le mariage mystique de sainte Catherine* — Quelque part sur la toile l'événement s'accomplit — l'enfant-Dieu passe l'anneau au doigt de la sainte — Tous les personnages cependant détournent la tête, et par cette distraction même nous imposent une hallucinante impression de présence. Ceux qui ne nous trouvent pas immédiatement assez "pratiques", nous n'avons pas de meilleur apologue à leur dire.⁸⁵

Thus, like the Russian Populists, the French personalists believed that they could symbolically "go to the people", educate the unenlightened to become persons, and then,

⁸²de Rougemont, Politique de la Person, 178.

⁸³A. Marc and René Dupuis, "La Corporation." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (April, 1934), 596.

⁸⁴Mounier, Personalism, 72, *Esprit* vigorously denied that personalism was utopian, they insisted that even the new personalist world would hold trials and suffering [Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance.", OE, 141] Disciples of Dostoevsky, and originally of Christ, they were not offering a life of material ease, of "bread", in return for depriving people of their freedom and uniqueness.

⁸⁵OE, 134.

spontaneously, their revolution would occur.⁸⁶

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret French personalism as a pacific, impotent movement. With their commitment to action and their acceptance of elitism, they were potential despots. Marc had learned from the Russian Populists and from his experiences in the Revolution that the mass of people will never improve themselves without the direction of an elite; Mounier's revolutionists were to lead, inspire, and educate "as a religious order".⁸⁷ The personalists' "knight-monk" imagery supported an ideology that expected and demanded action, even violent action, in the name of their revolution. Mounier insisted that,

...personal life necessitates the confrontation of violence by violence; to try to eradicate aggressiveness altogether from education, or too early to swamp the virile energies of youth in idealistic hopes - this is less likely to realize any ideal than to spoil the fighters for it.⁸⁸

L'Ordre Nouveau condoned terrorism and violence in the course of dismantling the old order and power structures. Committed to a new "truth", the personalists wanted to annihilate all the lies of materialism, all the past errors, and inaugurate the Second Renaissance.

Elle naît du mouvement de violence spirituelle intense par lequel l'homme parvient à rompre le contact avec l'ordre établi qui l'opprime et à créer en

⁸⁶In the summer of 1874 several thousand members of the intelligentsia left the cities and went "to the people" to educate them, learn from them, and incite revolution. Herzen, Lavrov, and Bakunin all inspired this movement. Although in practice, their effort failed (the *narod* frequently summoned the local constable to arrest these idealists and they made no effort to revolt against the Tsar [Stuart Tompkins, The Russian Intelligentsia, (Norman, 1957), 111.]) this movement remains the symbol of Russian Populism.

⁸⁷Mounier, "Révolution communautaire." OE, 190.

⁸⁸Mounier, Personalism, 50.

parvient à rompre le contact avec l'ordre établi qui l'opprime et à créer en lui-même de nouvelles valeurs, situées au-delà des déterminismes du taux ordre existant.⁸⁹

Even their approach to the development of the person contained strains of violence "the person attains self-consciousness, not through some ecstasy but by force of mortal combat; and force is one of its principle attributes".⁹⁰ The personalists also made a hierarchical distinction between persons and other human beings. Persons, their "knight-monks", were elevated, superior beings who "call to all those around and **below** them" to rouse others out of their "drowsy, vegetative slumber".⁹¹ *L'Ordre Nouveau* characterized its movement thus:

manifeste toujours l'apparition d'un principe de vie nouveau, le reclassement de tous les faits humains autour de ce principe, le renouvellement de toutes les valeurs par l'accession à un plan radicalement différent, en un mot, par un changement *total*.⁹²

The violent approach of the French personalists to revolution is reminiscent to that of Russia's radical revolutionaries: Bakunin, Russia's first "professional revolutionary",⁹³ applauded destruction as a creative force. With this outlook, it is not surprising that he accepted the revolutionary tactics of terrorism and violence, and that he advocated an

⁸⁹René Dupuis, "Révolution permanente." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Feb. 1934), 502.

⁹⁰Mounier, Personalism, 49.

⁹¹Mounier, Personalism, X.

⁹²Marc, "Ni révolte, ni réforme: Révolution française." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (July, 1933), 114.

⁹³RP1., 379.

elite, centralized, dictatorial organization for a revolutionary party.⁹⁴ Chernyshevsky also advocated violent revolution. However he had no desire to allow the potential chaos that Bakunin's anarchism would permit. Rather an elite group of revolutionaries, culled from the intelligentsia, would effect a coup d'état and replace the present regime with its own dictatorship. Once it obtained power it could institute socialism from above.⁹⁵ Chernyshevsky's theories were taken to the extreme by Petr Tkachev (1844-1885) who espoused revolutionary techniques which horrified most of his peers. He advocated the formation of an elite revolutionary group and scorned all ideas of preparing the *narod* for the revolution; he considered the masses incapable of freeing themselves.⁹⁶ Rather, his destructive elite alone would change Russia. Thus like Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and Bakunin, the French personalists translated ideas of philosophical reform into concrete, elitist, revolutionary action.⁹⁷

Dogmatism, which had been Berdyaev's greatest enemy when he lived in Russia, infiltrated French personalism. The personalists ignored the warnings of Herzen and Dostoevsky who realized that radicalism, any attempt to completely remake the world, was doomed to be contaminated by past truths which it either ignored or shunned. Yet Berdyaev must accept some responsibility for the radicalism embraced by the personalists.

⁹⁴ Bakunin, Paris Commune and the Idea of the State, (London, 1973), 4.

⁹⁵ Chernyshevsky, What is to be Done, (Ann Arbor, 1971).

⁹⁶ Walicki, 229.

⁹⁷ Iswolsky considered the greatest weakness of *Esprit* to be its elitist, academic language which prevented the transmission of their message to the masses; their "fixed frames of thought" and archaic expression instead engendered contempt and suspicion from the common people. [Iswolsky, 115.]

Despite his long experience with revolution, his extensive knowledge of history, and his essentially reform-oriented philosophy, he refused to accept that the personalist revolution might be no more "right" than any other revolution

When people tell me that a "new order" is to be brought about and man is to be released by a change in the mechanism of society, I want to say to them: for God's sake refresh your memory! Your new order is as old as any other. There has never been a time when man was freed by society: he was always at its mercy, at its secular or religious mercy. **A new "order" will arise on the ashes of all orders and as a result of the only effective, the personalistic revolution.**⁹⁸
(My emphasis)

Esprit and *L'Ordre Nouveau* were convinced that they had already unlocked their personal doors into the spiritual universe. As burgeoning persons, they could thus correctly and beneficially lead France and the world to a new historical idea, to a renaissance, a new world order. The emphasis in Slavophile philosophy and *Vekh* had been upon creating one's own integral personality; French personalists believed they had attained this position. Now they could move on to the revolution. And the personalists certainly evolved a more concrete doctrine pertaining to their new society than the Slavophile's or *Vekh*'s vague *sobornost*'. The platform of *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau* was the incarnation of Berdyaev's vision of a New Middle Ages.

⁹⁸D&R., 309.

Chapter 3. The New Middle Ages: A Third Way.

French personalism sought an alternative ideology to individualist capitalism, fascism and communism. The personalists' opposition to communism derived from their impressions of the despotic regime in the Soviet Union, and from the opinions of Russian emigres like Berdyaev and Marc. Berdyaev's philosophy of communism was especially significant because of his first-hand experience with marxism¹ and the early communist restructuring of Russia: he was able to place communism within the spectrum of world and Russian history rather than rejecting it as a temporary aberration. Berdyaev's theory was also attractive to the French personalists, because it did not simply dismiss the socialist "truths" of communism, but rather asserted that communism was a perversion of Christianity; by establishing a religious critique of communism, Berdyaev offered the personalists a spiritual method to combat its rising influence in France.

Berdyaev began his attack on marxism in 1901. His first book, Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy, (1901), attacked marxism for its failure to provide a

¹In 1895, Berdyaev joined the Social Democrats in Kiev under Lunacharsky and soon became a leading theoretician. For three years in Kiev he was a dedicated and persuasive communist. He enjoyed working with the proletariat cells, and possessed an unusual ability to communicate with the workers: "During my Marxist period in Kiev...a number of workers who were hostile to the intelligentsia made an exception in my case, welcomed me and treated me with great friendliness." [D&R, 62.] His commitment to marxism even led to a four-year exile in Vologda for conspiracy and inciting revolution. However, Berdyaev soon grew disillusioned with marxist ideology and severed his allegiance with the Social Democrats. During his exile, Berdyaev became thoroughly familiar with the Russian revolutionary tradition and the specifically Russian marxist mentality: "...they believed the gospel of Marx would bring a golden age of happiness for all mankind. As Turkova says, 'They did not know life, and considered it unnecessary to know it'." [Lowrie, 41.]

concrete philosophy that legitimized its social claims; it merely denigrated all other philosophies.² Having studied philosophy for three years at the University of Kiev, Berdyaev realized that it was not sufficient to consider the morality of the proletariat superior to the morality of the bourgeoisie, merely because one felt sympathy with the proletariat's situation. He felt that marxist sentimentality had eroded its ability to draw logical philosophical conclusions. For Berdyaev, a persuasive philosophy required some "objective moral sanction", a concrete rationale.³

After the 1905 Revolution, Berdyaev increased his attacks on marxism, and more generally, on the entire attitude of the Russian intelligentsia. He participated in the 1909 review *Vekhi* with an article entitled, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth" in which he asserted that Russia's historical development had not only retarded the study of philosophy, but had also limited such study to wholly utilitarian goals. The intelligentsia had become so committed to social change for the benefit of the *narod* that they were unable to accept any ideas that did not immediately further this cause

For most of the intelligentsia, interest in philosophy was limited to the need for philosophical sanction of its social sentiments and aspirations. These are neither shaken nor re-evaluated as a result of philosophical

²Berdyaev, "Subjectivism and Objectivism.", in RP3, 149.

³Berdyaev, "Subjectivism and Objectivism" RP3., 151., "Berdyaev explains his spiritual movement away from marxism in terms that some otherwise intelligent thinkers have not yet discovered today, half a century later. 'The dialectic theory of the necessity of social catastrophe is not only unscientific, logically inept, conflicting with the facts of life, but it is profoundly anti-idealistic' - this within a few years after marxism had been hailed by the mass of Russian liberals as the all-sufficient, scientific answer to every problem!" [Lowrie, 106.]

reflection; they remain fixed, as dogmas.⁴

In this attack, Berdyaev reiterated Dostoevsky's position against the illogical and materialistic environmental socialism. Like Dostoevsky, Berdyaev could not accept the renunciation of philosophical truths in the name of "bread" or social justice;⁵ he feared the intolerance ("us" versus "them") propagated by such dogmatism. Without a concrete philosophy or at least a developed plan for the future system, the intelligentsia was in great danger, not only of inciting terrible violence and repression, but also of producing a replica of the past system where the degraded "us" became the oppressors of the "them", and eventually the new autocrats of Russia.⁶

Berdyaev did not leave the Russian intelligentsia bereft of a possible solution. After his blistering attack, he called for introspection and an intensive search for a wholly Russian philosophy that would produce a logical and humane blueprint for a new Russia. Berdyaev, in an attempt to resurrect Slavophile ideology, asserted that the intelligentsia's goals were, in fact, the goals of Russian philosophy.

But Russian philosophy does have features that make it akin to the Russian

⁴Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth" in *Vekhi*, 161.

⁵"...love for egalitarian justice, for social good, for the welfare of the people, paralysed love for truth and almost destroyed all interest in truth. But philosophy is a school of love for truth above all....Even Kant was taken up only because critical Marxism promised to base the socialist ideal on his thought. Then we set to work on the quite indigestible Avenarius, for his extremely abstract and 'pure' philosophy, unbeknown to him and through no fault of his own, suddenly presented itself as the philosophy of the Social-Democratic Bolsheviks." [Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth." *Vekhi*, 162.]

Dostoevsky's critique of materialist socialism is most concretely presented in his novel The Brothers Karamazov.

⁶Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth." *Vekhi*, 164-169.

intelligentsia: the thirst for an integral world-view, for an organic merging of truth and good, of knowledge and faith...hostility to abstract rationalism. I think concrete idealism, combined with a realistic attitude to life, could become the foundation of our national philosophical creation and could establish the national philosophical tradition that we need so much.⁷

Unless this national philosophy was formed, Berdyaev foresaw the transformation of Russia, through revolution, into either chaos or a new despotism - marxism.

As history bears witness, Berdyaev's message was not received. Russia plunged into the chaotic 1917 Revolution from which the Bolsheviks emerged triumphant. Berdyaev was soon vindicated by the Bolsheviks' wholesale oppression of religion, the aristocracy, and even of competing revolutionary parties: the Constituent Assembly was violently dissolved by the Red Army and protestors were unmercifully gunned down. Although dismayed by the abrupt end to Russia's "renaissance", Berdyaev never became discouraged. He felt "that there was some genuinely human element released" by the Revolution and he applauded the end of the Autocracy; he intended to assist the "liberation of communist Russia from within".⁸ During the next four years he refined his opposition to communism: accepting the truths of communism, Berdyaev did not entirely condemn it, but rather concentrated on pointing out its flaws; he viewed communism as,

⁷Berdyaev., "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth.", *Vekhi*, 171. Berdyaev does note that by "national" he is not referring to a "national truth" and he accepts that truth is universal, but rather he is referring to a mentality that to him appears uniquely Russian: that is towards religious philosophy.

⁸D&R, 236., "Least of all did I desire restoration. I was entirely convinced that the old world had come to an end and that a return to it was alike impossible and undesirable." [D&R, 228.]

On the one hand the search for the Kingdom of God and integrated truth and justice, capacity for sacrifice and the absence of the bourgeois spirit; on the other hand, the absoluteness of the State and despotism, a feeble grasp of the rights of man and the danger of a featureless collectivism.⁹

And he vocally opposed the Bolshevik regime.¹⁰ Besides lecturing and engaging in debates, Berdyaev wrote copiously. Before 1922 he had finished The Meaning of History, The Philosophy of Inequality, Russian Freedom, and Dostoevsky. All but the last, however, were not published until he left Russia in 1922. Thus the most important contribution that he could make was denied to the Soviet populace until 1987. His book Russian Freedom would be later edited and transformed into three of his most famous works, The Origin of Russian Communism, Christianity and Class War and The Russian Revolution.

In his books, Berdyaev produced a complete and devastating critique of communism. He attributed the socialist rebellion against the injustice of capitalism, with which he was in sympathy, to a singular, and beneficial, inherited aspect of Christianity - the Jewish tradition.

⁹ORC, 188., "Communism was for me from the very start a challenge and a reminder of an unfulfilled Christian duty. Christians ought to have embodied the truth of communism: had they done so, its falsehood would never have won the day." [D&R, 228.]

¹⁰Berdyaev organized lectures at his home and he also gave guest lectures at a variety of societal gatherings. [Lowne, 150.] As a "famous artist" Berdyaev was one of about twenty "favoured sons" who were not persecuted or hampered by the new Regime: he was allowed to continue his writing although only Dostoevsky was published in Russia; he initiated the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture and became president of the All-Russian Society of Writers; he was elected to the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Moscow in 1920; his family was even allowed to maintain their current residence and received double food rations. [Ibid., 149-152.]

This dualism of the Jewish historical consciousness gave rise to the religious millennium which aspired toward the future in a passionate demand and longing for the fulfilment of the millenary Kingdom of God on earth, and the advent of the Day of Judgement when evil would finally be vanquished by good, and when an end would come to the injustice and sufferings common to the terrestrial destiny of mankind ¹¹

Postulating that Christianity evolved out of two sets of historical traditions - religious and racial - Berdyaev identified a polarity between the Greek and the Jewish religions, and the Aryan [Indo-European] and Jewish races.¹² The Greek religion attributed to their many gods not only superhuman strength, but also very human characteristics. They placed significant change beyond the reach of human beings - a god might feel like helping humans, he might just as easily destroy them, people had some recourse through sacrifice and prayer, but the success of these supplications was never guaranteed. Moreover, because the Greeks believed in a cyclical pattern to life, they never saw specific events and changes as part of a concrete progression, they were at the mercy of their gods' quarrels and whims. The Jews, while not possessing a particularly merciful God, believed that their actions influenced the linear accession toward the Messiah, human salvation depended upon solving social injustice.¹³ In Berdyaev's racial polarity, the Aryans were obsessively preoccupied by their individual souls and life after death

¹¹MH, 90.

¹²MH., 90.

¹³MH, 21., "I believe that socialism is based upon a Jewish religious principle, upon the eschatological myth and the profound dualism of the Jewish consciousness...This dualism...gave rise to the religious millennium which aspired toward the future in a passionate demand and longing for the fulfilment of the millenary Kingdom of God on earth, and the advent of the Day of Judgment when evil would finally be vanquished by good, and when an end would come to the injustice and sufferings common to the terrestrial destiny of mankind " [MH., 90].

They never concerned themselves with the collective good or will.¹⁴ The Jews, on the contrary, possessed a collective destiny: "the alliance of the Jewish spirit with the destiny of the people make of the Jews a collective people"¹⁵ Consequently the Jews could not ignore any person's plight if they wished to fulfil their own destiny. Berdyaev asserted that, in the formation of Christianity, these traditions were co-mingled, and that the specific characteristics of each appeared in the European Christian world.

From this base, Berdyaev described the progression of these influences in European history. Capitalism - an expression of excessive individuality or Aryan philosophy - became the reigning economic ideology. It legitimized individual profit, and allowed the degradation and economic enslavement of the proletariat. The decline of feudalism led to enclosures and the formation of commercial farms which dispossessed the old peasant class of their villages and cooperative life. Christianity was sundered by schisms (the greatest of which was Protestantism), and then lost most of its meaning and importance in the lives of the people. Individualism was the creed and totem, the only religion and the only political focus. Then socialism arose, not solely to protest the great wrongs committed in the name of individualism, but also as a consequence of the Jewish tradition. Being a collective and progressive people, the Jews espoused an "Heaven on earth" - utopia.

This intense longing [for utopia] symbolizes the religious collectivism of the Jewish people. It could accept neither Christ nor the mystery of His Crucifixion because he came as the bearer of a meek and not a triumphant

¹⁴MH., 82-88.

¹⁵MH., 90.

truth on earth. His whole life and death were a repudiation of the longing for terrestrial beatitude cherished by the Jewish people.¹⁶

The Jewish tradition gained popularity and strength in Europe among the disenfranchised as modern systems undermined and replaced old traditions and communities

Socialism, I believe, is the outcome of the disintegration of human society and communal life, and of man's isolation produced by the extreme development of individualism. The terror of abandonment and isolation in the face of destiny, and the lack of all communion with other people, incite man to re-establish some form of communal and compulsory life.¹⁷

As an advocate of freedom, Berdyaev had serious problems with the compulsory aspect of this utopia. Yet he agreed that excessive individualism had been a curse to most of mankind: it had subjugated them to the "fittest", and he fully supported a change in the status quo.

Berdyaev's quarrel was with the format this change would take, for he saw in marxism an excessive expression of the Jewish principle:

...his [Marx's] proletarian theory was not scientific but religious, messianic, mythical; he created the myth of the messiah-proletariat, the unique class free from the original sin of exploitation, the elect people of God, saviours of mankind, endowed with every virtue.¹⁸

Berdyaev objected to the idolization of any class, and he found Marx's sequence of social change highly illogical. Marx insisted that humans must undergo the abuses of

¹⁶MH., 96.

¹⁷MH., 148. This opinion was also held by Jacques Maritain. A contemporary of Berdyaev, Maritain perceived in marxism the greatest threat to humanity: "Maritain interpreted Communism's messianic drive to liberate man from all limits and to install him in a self-sufficing secular kingdom as the most vengeful face of anthropocentrism that would acknowledge no material, natural, or spiritual boundaries in its drive for total power." [Amato, 143.]

¹⁸C&C., 42.

capitalism, see that "exploitation is an evil and a sin, even the greatest evil and the worst sin", before they could achieve the communist utopia.

But his [Marx's] moralism is perverted, even demoniacal: he looks on evil as the only highway towards good, an increase of darkness is the only means of getting light; brotherhood, equality, and friendship among men are born out of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, violence and repression bring freedom in their train.¹⁹

Berdyaev was perplexed as to how the proletariat, encouraged to be "bitter, envious, vindictive, and prone to violence" by marxism, could suddenly create "a new and better social system.. new and better relations between men" ²⁰ He also disagreed with Marx's irrational assertion that capitalism was the ultimate evil. "In the end what remains of his [Marx's] (and still more his successors') work is a crude libel in which the bourgeois classes are accused of deliberately criminal intentions."²¹

Marx attacked capitalism because it "turns relations of men into relations of things".²² Berdyaev recognized this as Marx's best and most authentic truth, but he then applied this condemnation to Marx's own theory. If capitalist materialist economics dehumanized man, then there must be more to life than labour, and man must have a spiritual side which is stifled in the capitalist system. Hence if capitalism is wrong, then beyond the economic and materialist world must exist living men and creative beings whose work and energy are appreciated. Therefore, economics is no more than the

¹⁹C&C., 45

²⁰C&C., 71.

²¹C&C., 21.

²²C&C., 39.

struggle of living creatures; it is a part of their creative activity. "There is no substantial economic reality; consequently, all economic categories are only historical categories, and not eternal principles as the classical bourgeois political economy teaches"²³ Having established this, Marx then contradicted himself - he asserted that all men belong to a class, which is a thing, an object; Marx derided capitalism for objectifying man and then proceeded to do exactly the same thing with his own system. "The very process of dehumanization which Marx denounced in capitalism, takes place in materialistic Communism...Both may turn man into a technical function."²⁴ Marx followed the capitalists in placing economics above humanity; he replaced the capitalist idol of profit with his own idol - class; he reduced "man in his highest manifestations and his deepest spiritual experiences to a subordinate function of the class"²⁵

From current events Berdyaev demonstrated the addictive and corrupting power of bourgeois capitalism. In France, the efforts of trade unions had improved the economic situation of the proletariat, who, appeased by better conditions, began to support reform and not revolution. Socialism lost its zeal as the proletariat aspired to become bourgeois:

Socialism is definitely becoming a party which supports good order, the practical reforming elements are coming uppermost in social democracy, and the revolutionary and messianic *pathos* is vanishing. Communists are most indignant at this state of affairs, but they are themselves only the

²³C&C., 39.

²⁴Berdyaev "Marx versus Man" in RP3., 163.

²⁵C&C., 33.

bourgeois of tomorrow or the day after.²⁶

Not only was the appeal of marxism declining, said Berdyaev, but the one example of proto-communism, the Soviet Union, had in fact completely adopted capitalist ethics:

Communism has taken the form of State Capitalism and allows no professional and trade associations which do not depend directly on itself. After having absorbed personality, society in turn finds itself absorbed by the state, which is thus enabled to become an oppressor and exploiter, to invent new sorts of slave-labour, to turn working-men once again into bond-men, and to perfect a new system of tyranny.²⁷

Thus for Berdyaev, Marx had completely failed in his attempt to destroy capitalism. Rather Marx had developed a system that was completely corrupted by materialist capitalism.

Berdyaev could not accept a marxism that subjected people to the "faceless collective" as a solution to the slavery of capitalism. For Berdyaev, "class" could not be "good, intelligent, or noble", only each specific person could exhibit these characteristics. Berdyaev again pointed to Marx's only success in Soviet Russia:

But will the success of the proletariat, the abolition of classes, the establishment of this organized rationality be a victory for man? He was borne down in the past by classes and class warfare. Will he survive in the future? No. He will definitively disappear, leaving only a "collective" behind him.²⁸

It was for this reason that Berdyaev dedicated his most concrete attack of marxism, Christianity and Class War, to Karl Marx, "who was the social master of my youth and whose opponent in ideas I have now become".

²⁶C&C., 48.

²⁷C&C., 76,77.

²⁸C&C., 42,43.

Despite his opposition to marxism, Berdyaev never accepted capitalist ethics. He abhorred the materialist conception of the individual, and feared that excessive individualism would lead to as tragic an end as marxism. When Berdyaev became associated with the Symbolists in Moscow (1904-1907)²⁹, he was introduced to the philosophy of Nietzsche. For Berdyaev, the destiny of individualism was Nietzsche's "superman", a construction which he abhorred. Berdyaev could not accept the superman's sacrifice of contemporary human beings: its future existence dismissed the entire course of human history, reducing to the position of transitory, those whose sole worth consisted in preparing for the arrival of the superman. "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman - a rope over an abyss. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal..."³⁰ Not only did Berdyaev reject the validity of this unknown utopia, but also he abhorred Nietzsche's easy dismissal of the importance of humanity.³¹ Furthermore, the superman was, for Berdyaev, an inhuman entity, it lacked all spirituality and grace, and was bereft of humanity; as the perfect machine, the superman contradicted Berdyaev's personal conception of human beings and offended his strong Christian

²⁹When he found rigidly materialist Marxism unsatisfactory, Berdyaev turned to the "God-seekers": the Symbolists in St. Petersburg and Moscow who devoted their discussions to the Russian apocalyptic soul: "Now we can hear the music of the symbols, which speak to us of another world. But our art is not the final goal - art must give place to theurgy. We strive for the incarnation of eternity by means of the transfiguration of resurrected personality, the perception of spiritual reality behind the visible." [Andrei Bely in Lowrie, 87.]

³⁰Nietzsche, in The Great Thoughts, George Seldes, ed., (New York, 1985), 312.

³¹MH., 138.

beliefs.³²

Berdyayev asserted that Nietzsche's superman was the result of his atheistic rationalism: unable to reconcile the tragedy of good and evil and to accept the principle of human redemption as manifested in the Crucifixion, Nietzsche refused Christ's salvation because it provided no simple solution to the problem of freedom.

The thing which Dostoevsky and Nietzsche knew is that man is terribly free, that liberty is tragic and a grievous burden to him. They had seen the parting of the ways in front of mankind, one road leading to the God-man, Jesus Christ, the other to self deification, the man-god [the superman]...³³

It was for this reason, Berdyayev explained, that Nietzsche turned to the temptation of the Antichrist and destroyed humanity for his illusive, omnipotent superman.³⁴ Berdyayev perceived in Nietzsche the "dead-end" of individualism.

To Berdyayev, Marx and Nietzsche were pursuing the way of the Antichrist: Where Nietzsche would destroy mankind for his anti-human superman, Marx subsumed man to the inhuman faceless collective.

Two paths lie open to contemporary man faced by a schism at the apex of modern history. He can either submit himself to the highest divine principles of life and thus strengthen his personality or he can become the slave and subject of nondivided and superhuman principles.³⁵

Berdyayev did not simply oppose the paths of Marx and Nietzsche, he advocated a third

³²Nietzsche's "superman takes the place of the lost God. He cannot and does not want to keep himself human, on the human level. In the superhuman individualism of Nietzsche the image of man perishes." [ER., 39.]

³³DOS., 63

³⁴MH., 140.

³⁵MH., 158.

way, the way towards Christ and redemption, a New Middle Ages

Berdyaev's "personalist" ideology evolved out of his unique conception of history. The original and central theme of his philosophy was that man was created by God to be, himself, a creator.³⁶ Therefore, Berdyaev categorized history into periods of creativity. In Berdyaev's conceptualization, there were four periods of creativity: the pre-Christian, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the coming "New Middle Ages".³⁷ In the first and third periods, creative freedom was maximized and the great works of individual art were constructed. In the Middle Ages, asceticism flourished, stifling the creative freedom of individuals, this unification and forging the creative spirit was essential for the outburst of creativity during the Renaissance.³⁸ It must be noted here that Berdyaev did not believe in cyclical or

³⁶In 1912, Berdyaev visited Florence with his wife and sister-in-law. He had already devoted ten years to in-depth religious study and spiritual introspection, and in Florence, seeing the great works of the Renaissance, his philosophical and spiritual knowledge fused for the first time into a wholly original conception of meaning. "He [Berdyaev] had a sudden new vision of the whole of the world's history, human and divine. God created man to be himself a creator. Man realizes his highest capacities in answering God's creative love with loving creativity of his own" [Lowrie, 138]. This idea allowed Berdyaev to categorize history into periods of creativity. It also led him to formulate an ideology which would lead humanity out of the Modern Age.

³⁷Berdyaev prophesied this era in his book The New Middle Ages (1923). Here he offered a concrete description of the future and explained why he thought this age was coming. His conviction that the world was moving into a new era of history was strengthened by the events of the 1930s (especially the Depression), by the Russian Revolution and by World War One. Even in his posthumous autobiography, Berdyaev still called for the "personalist revolution" to herald in the New Middle Ages.

³⁸"Indeed the whole significance of Christian asceticism lay in the concentration of spiritual forces and the refusal to waste them. Man's creative forces were concentrated and preserved when not allowed to express themselves with sufficient freedom" [MH, 113.]

repetitive history; his New Middle Ages would be no more a repeat of the Medieval Age than the Renaissance could be called a copy of the pre-Christian era.³⁹ He chose the term merely to illustrate a similarity in creative activity

The French personalists adopted Berdyaev's chronology, but they explained history as a gradual progression towards the unification of the spiritual and the material universes manifested in human beings. They replaced Berdyaev's revolving periods of creativity with a continual conflict for supremacy between the human desire for interaction - communalism - and the desire for self-perfection: individualism⁴⁰ Affected by the *entre-guerre* mentality, they saw their own period as the apocalyptic "final battle" between individualism and communalism; humanity would either annihilate itself, or it would finally resolve the conflict and transcend both instincts to achieve its true destiny: personalism. Thus the French personalists adopted Berdyaev's New Middle Ages as an alternative to the "dead ends" of communism and individualism, but they did not fully grasp his principle of creativity and its new manifestation in the New Middle Ages.

In the pre-Christian age, Berdyaev asserted that Hellenic influence led to deep contemplation and great creativity on all levels. However, Greek naturalist philosophy presumed that history was purely cyclical. This idea was passed on to the Romans, who

³⁹MH., 156.

⁴⁰This approach to history indicates the great influence of dialectical materialism. Despite their opposition to the materialist approach, the personalists ironically used the laws of the materialist dialectic - development through the stages of thesis, synthesis, antithesis - in their explanation of history. This is a good example of the immature application of philosophy practiced by social activists, and precisely the error that Berdyaev censured in his article "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth" in *Vekhi* (1909).

continued to create, but were tied to the repetitive pattern: their works of art were copies and elaborations of Greek works; their philosophy and beliefs mirrored those of the Greeks; they were caught in a cycle in which no new influences or ideas could flourish. "Christianity alone saved man from this cycle of elemental natural life and re-established his dignity by restoring the freedom of the human spirit, and it thus inaugurated a new era in his destiny."⁴¹

The French personalists were even less complimentary of the pre-Christian era. Refuting the natural philosophers like Rousseau, they denied that the simplicity of the purely "natural" life was beneficial or happy; rather they asserted that primitive humans were completely oppressed "sous le mur d'une Necessité inhumaine et hostile"⁴² *Esprit* rejected the idea that these people were inherently spiritual. continually at war with the elements, the pre-Christians fell prey to superstition and believed only in gods that were accomplices and spies in a "hostile and strange world". *Esprit* related religious spirituality to the belief in a kind, loving, and succouring God, not in vague appeals to nature.⁴³ For the personalists the pre-Christian ignorance of "true" spirituality demonstrated the original supremacy of the collective principle. human beings were valuable only as a part of some group and the concept of the individual was at best, embryonic. Despising the individual, the philosophers of this period valued "only

⁴¹MH., 104.

⁴²Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 153.

⁴³Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 154.

impersonal thought and its static order...To them the singular appears as a blemish" ⁴⁴

From this basis, it is not surprising that the French personalists viewed the onset of Christianity as the partial emancipation of humanity from the whims of nature and the collective.⁴⁵ Christianity revealed to human beings their spiritual dimension "The Incarnation confirms the unity of earth and heaven, of the flesh and the spirit, as soon as the redemptive value of human work has been assumed by grace" ⁴⁶ With their new religion, Christians were able to move beyond the conception of man as "a child of the world and nature", and assert their "spiritual or high aristocratic origin" which freed them from "the baser elemental processes".⁴⁷

Berdyaev did not consider the Middle Ages to be a creative period; it was a time when man forged his discipline and united spirit, as in the models of the knight and the monk: "man's inner being was discovered in the Middle Ages, when he was engaged in spiritual work and stood in the center of the Christian faith and Creation..." ⁴⁸ Thus in the Middle Ages people unified their entire beings, and consolidated their spiritual and material abilities. It was a necessary precursor for the outburst of creativity during the Renaissance.

The French personalists accepted that the Middle Ages had been repressive and

⁴⁴Mounier, Personalism, XI.

⁴⁵Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 154.

⁴⁶Mounier, Personalism, XIV.

⁴⁷MH., 112.

⁴⁸MH., 118.

primitive in its approach to society, but they also agreed with Berdyaev's theory that medieval asceticism had been necessary for the forging of human creativity. "Mais que l'homme en use spirituellement, par un maîtrise éclairée, et l'obstacle devient instrument, éducateur de l'esprit par les difficultés mêmes qu'il lui oppose"⁴⁹ The tragedy of the Middle Ages was that its people could not accept in totality the message of Christianity "This vision was too new, too radical, for all that it implied to be known at once"⁵⁰ A tentative balance was reached between the individual and collective impulses, but "the logical and conceptual machinery inherited from the Greeks, rooted in classification and generalization, did not facilitate" the expression of the "dignity of matter and the unity of the human being".⁵¹ When the balance broke down due to an "outpouring of creativity" in reaction to the repressive hierarchical structures of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance inaugurated the supremacy of the particular, the individual, over the collective. "Thenceforth philosophy is no longer a lesson to be learnt, but a personal meditation which anyone is invited to begin again on his own account."⁵²

Although both the personalists and Berdyaev applauded the improvement of material conditions and the aspirations of Renaissance humanism which was "creative and splendid in its works,"⁵³ they also condemned the tenets upon which the Renaissance

⁴⁹Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 154.

⁵⁰Mounier, Personalism, XIV.

⁵¹Mounier, Personalism, XV.

⁵²Mounier, Personalism, XV.

⁵³ER., 28.

was founded. Berdyaev unveiled a philosophical error in the conception of Renaissance humanism. He asserted that humanism had placed the natural man rather than the integral man at its centre, it adopted the wholly rational path instead of combining reason and faith; it allowed man only a mental and physical heritage and denied his spiritual essence.

It divorced him from the interior significance and the divine center of life, from the deepest foundations of man's very nature; and it then gave him the freedom of creative development. In fact, humanism denied that man was the image and likeness of God; that he was a reflection of the Divine Being.⁵⁴

Thus as Renaissance humanism focused more upon the biological entity, humanity's connection with its spiritual and creative source was severed. "Man's self-affirmation leads to his perdition; the free play of human forces unconnected with any higher aim brings about the exhaustion of man's creative powers."⁵⁵ Berdyaev pointed to the rising trends of Futurism in art, Critical Gnoseology in philosophy, Socialism and Anarchism in politics, and most of all to World War One and the Russian Revolution as the "ruin of the Renaissance".⁵⁶ "Humanism betrayed reality, which is holy, and man pays for this treachery the price of his own history: he suffers disillusion after disillusion."⁵⁷

⁵⁴MH., 124.

⁵⁵MH., 124.

⁵⁶ER., 56. "The old worn-out world to which we can never go back is precisely the world of modern history: a world of rationalist prophets, of individualism and Humanism, Liberalism and democratic theories, of imposing national monarchies and imperialist politics, of a monstrous economic system compounded of Industrialism and Capitalism, of vast technical apparatus, of exterior conquests and practical achievements; a world of unbridled and endless covetousness in its public life, of atheism and supreme disdain for the soul, and, at last, of Socialism, the end and crown of all contemporary history." [NMA, 78.]

⁵⁷ER., 57.

Maritain agreed with Berdyaev's analysis of Renaissance humanism⁵⁸ in refusing to accept the spiritual dimension of humanity, humanism was unable to solve the problem of good and evil or explain the purpose of life. Naturalist humanism divorced faith, grace, and salvation from reason and freedom, thus denying human beings full access to their inherent potential. In making this mere vestige of a whole person the centre of all life, "the end of knowledge", and "the purpose of all past and future existence", this humanism had destroyed the spirit and soul of humanity and led it into "the hands of Darwin and Freud, by claiming that he [man] was no more than an immanent part of a biological process and a conscious point of intersection between the demands of the sexual libido and the death instinct"⁵⁹

The French personalists, accepting Maritain's and Berdyaev's explanation, found a convenient scapegoat for humanity's divorce from the spiritual: Descartes. The Renaissance's improvement in social relations and the importance of the individual were countered by the "chaos mécanique" presented in the Cartesian polarity which divided the concepts of "mind and body, spirit and matter, truth and action"⁶⁰. Thus, although the individual finally attained a position of supremacy in the Renaissance, it was a mechanized, material individual which bore no resemblance to the unified person evoked by Christ.

The bleak self-characterization rendered by Renaissance humanism prompted

⁵⁸Jacques Maritain, "Religion et Culture." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933), 523-545., and MH., 124.

⁵⁹Amato, 142.

⁶⁰Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 155.

people to search for any alternative. Like Kireevsky, the personalists perceived that industry had provided such an escape:

Enfin comme la matière n'est plus qu'un instrument servile de l'industrie, toutes ses beautés propres, qui faisaient l'étoffe lourde de notre poésie et de notre vie, s'effacent sous une seule admiration: l'admiration de la puissance mécanique; au plus nul, par le facile secret de quelques déclics, elle apporte l'illusion d'une maîtrise dont il eût été incapable dans un monde sans leviers; au plus habile elle décerne le prestige d'un dieu.⁶¹

This "god" enslaved and automated humanity, but it also allowed people to abdicate their preeminent position in the world and ignore the pointlessness of a solely rational, material destiny. The culmination of this voluntary enslavement lay in Hegel who believed in "the complete subservience of the individual to the State".⁶²

As humanism collapsed, its child, individualism also lost all validity. Maritain had declared that "l'homme individuel est mûr pour l'abdication...il est mûr abdiquer en faveur de l'homme collectif".⁶³ Berdyaev had offered a similar assertion, maintaining that the new popularity, the new religion of socialism and communism was a direct result of the failure of naturalist humanism and individualism.⁶⁴ Perhaps because of their historical perspective, both Maritain and Berdyaev saw in marxism the reality of collectivism and the greatest threat to humanity.⁶⁵ The French personalists accepted the besieged state of the individual and feared a new ascendancy of collectivism. However, they did not

⁶¹Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance, OE., 156.

⁶²Mounier, Personalism, XVI.

⁶³Maritain, "Religion et Culture." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933), 530.

⁶⁴NMA, 78.

⁶⁵Amato, 143.

believe that marxism was the sole collective threat. Rather they asserted that people in the 1930s, as in the pre-Christian era, were refusing to accept any responsibility over the world, their lives, or their destiny. Whether the new gods were industry, the state, the communist collective, or the fascist and National Socialist dictators, people had returned to a naturalist, non-human state in which they were completely impotent.

Berdyaev equated the end of the Renaissance to the decline of the Roman Empire. He could not predict the future, but he did see several possible outcomes. The Renaissance had created techniques and technology which could potentially sacrifice humans to the apocalyptic end as manifested either in the anti-human superman of Nietzsche or the non-human collectivism of Marx.⁶⁶

For he can have no vision of himself if he has none of the higher Divine nature; he becomes a slave of the baser processes, disintegrating into the elements of his own nature and becoming the victim of the artificial nature of the machine he has conjured up into life, and these depersonalize, weaken and finally annihilate him.⁶⁷

However, as the seemingly destructive cycle of Rome had been rescued by Christianity, Berdyaev hoped for the possibility of a similar resurrection through a New Middle Ages. He was aware of the underside of a New Middle Ages; unthinking and hysterical reaction to the apocalypse could result in chaos and barbarism. Berdyaev saw fascism as an example of this: fascism would not result in the apocalyptic ends of Marx and Nietzsche; rather it would continue and magnify the errors of Renaissance humanism and return

⁶⁶MH., 138.

⁶⁷MH., 137.

humanity to a state of primitive bestiality.⁶⁸ Berdyaev called the fascists the "paganist enemies of Christ".⁶⁹ Thus, where the personalists considered history to be a monotonous conflict between individualism and collectivism - be it fascist or communist - and asserted that the only "final" solution was the transcendence of this rivalry, Berdyaev saw history as a progression towards Godmanhood; individualism and collectivism as espoused by Nietzsche and Marx were simply divergent paths which led nowhere and misdirected humanity, and fascism was a mindless chimera, a perversion, of the correct pathway to Christ. Always committed to personal freedom, Berdyaev asserted that humans could either approach the new era "by ways of darkness" and usher in a "new chaos of peoples; the feudalization of Europe", or "by ways of light", and rise above Humanism to seek "salvation at the divine wells of life" - his New Middle Ages.⁷⁰

Berdyaev suggested a new system of Christian ethics to assist the development of the New Middle Ages; Maritain insisted that Catholicism alone could liberate humanity and inaugurate a new civilization. Both envisioned a new society of saints, monks, and knights - not sacral but "secular and lay" - who would lead this new Christendom.⁷¹ Their philosophies provided the foundation for the personalist manifestos of both *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau*. First they would inaugurate Berdyaev's "New Middle Ages" and

⁶⁸NMA., 89,90.

⁶⁹C&C., 119.

⁷⁰ER., 56.

⁷¹Amato, 143., "His [Berdyaev's] concept of an integral Christian society, set forth in his book The New Middle Ages runs parallel to Maritain's doctrine of *True Humanism*. [Iswolsky, 99.]

shortly thereafter they would effect Maritain's "Second Renaissance" based on "integral humanism"; "Avant notre Renaissance, on l'a dit, il nous faut un nouveau Moyen Age."⁷²

Berdyaev's New Middle Ages was no mere copy of the original Middle Ages. The only similarity between the two would be man's free submission to a "higher principle". The New Middle Ages would also avoid the inhuman collective or individualist ends. Moreover, Berdyaev intended that this era would achieve a new approach to creativity. Berdyaev asserted that man had progressed since medieval times "we must now experience immanently what the Middle Ages experienced transcendently."⁷³ Throughout the course of history, and particularly through the experiences of the Renaissance, humans had discovered the worth and power of freedom.

The new middle age will give place to that experiment in liberty made by the modern world, with all the real benefits that we owe to it in the order of consciousness and the increased refining of the spirit that it has brought about.⁷⁴

Berdyaev's philosophy focused on the field of ethics, because it was in ethics that he perceived that humans still rarely asserted moral freedom. He analyzed the ethics of law, redemption, and creativity, to demonstrate the limitations of humanism, its perversion of Christian morality, and the pathway to a new Christian humanism.

⁷²Mounier, "Refaire la Renaissance." OE., 160., "The idea of "personalist revolution" was the development of Maritain's and Berdyaev's doctrine of Christian humanism." [Iswolsky, 110.]

⁷³MH., 157.

⁷⁴NMA., 79.

The current ethics of law proved the most distasteful to Berdyaev. Although he never espoused the complete negation of law - "the law is necessary for the sinful world and cannot be simply cancelled" - he despised the entrenched "herd" mentality of law: "...society lays down moral prohibitions, taboos, laws and norms to which the individual must submit under the penalty of moral excommunication and retribution".⁷⁵ As a Christian he insisted that "the human soul is worth more than all the kingdoms of the world".⁷⁶ But law presented an insurmountable paradox: although it subsumed the personal needs and nature of humans to a social norm, it also protected the person. "Christianity opens the way to the Kingdom of God where there is no more law, but meanwhile the law denounces sin and must be fulfilled by the world which remains in sin."⁷⁷

Once humankind realized that laws were a product of their own "Fall" and not God's punishment, a substantial motivation for atheism would be removed. However, the ultimate negation of the atheistic principle lay in the ethics of redemption. Humans were tormented by the coexistence of good and evil in this world: the "legalistic distinction between good and evil" insisted that people must attempt to conquer evil, but their failure

⁷⁵DM., 86,95.

⁷⁶DM., 100. This idea is directly taken from the writings of Dostoevsky, Belinsky, and Herzen.

Berdyaev noted that Charles Maurras of *l'Action française* considered the Gospel destructive and anarchistic because Christ denounced legalistic ethics and Pharisees, because Christ asserted that perfect purity and perfect fulfilment of law does not necessarily lead to God: "the Gospel transcends and cancels the ethics of law, replacing it by a different and higher ethics of love and freedom." [Ibid., 99.]

⁷⁷DM., 99.

to eradicate evil led them to blame God for either creating a world in which evil existed, or for giving them the ability to recognize evil.⁷⁸ Although he understood this rationale, Berdyaev asserted that it was illogical. Human beings had freely chosen the "Fall" and their new awareness; they could not blame God for their ability to know good and evil. He also postulated that God had not created the dichotomy between good and evil; rather it was a product of uncreated freedom, the *Ungrund*.⁷⁹ While God created the world and humanity, he was unable to prevent the influence of the *Ungrund* on his creation. It was precisely this freedom which led humanity to choose the Fall and subjugated them to a world in which evil would always exist. Berdyaev's philosophy thus exonerated God for the existence of evil upon earth. However, God, the loving Father, did send His son Christ to give people the message of redemption: "God shares the fate of the world"; He offers the ultimate succour, the Kingdom of Heaven, but He cannot save humans from evil on earth.⁸⁰

For Berdyaev, redemption was the "message of love". Christ's teachings and his ultimate personal sacrifice for humanity proved to people that God would always love them and always receive them into His kingdom; redemption placed the spiritual person, the God-man, at the centre of life, superior to all abstract ideas including good and evil.

Christianity in its original and virginal form not merely questioned the supremacy of the idea of the good, but sharply opposed its own morality based upon it...Christianity has placed man above the idea of the good...The idea of the good, like every other idea, must yield and make

⁷⁸DM., 103.

⁷⁹Jacob Boheme, cited in DM., 103.

⁸⁰DM., 103.

way for man. It is not the abstract idea of the good, but man who is God's creation and God's child.⁸¹

Christ told humans "to love one another". By founding His religion on love, Christ established the fact that God's morality is different from legalistic, worldly morality: love must be directed at a concrete person; it is impossible to *love* an abstract idea.⁸² Thus Christ gave people redemption and replaced good and evil with love. People could improve their lot by aspiring to God's morality of love on earth, and they were guaranteed an end to their trials in Heaven.

Berdyaev denigrated the continual perversion of this message at the hands of power-mongers, pharisees, and the self-righteous.

The idea of transcendental egoism, of the exclusive concern for the salvation of one's own soul, which some people deduce from ascetic literature, is a satanic idea, a satanic caricature of Christianity.⁸³

He levelled this charge most harshly against the Church hierarchy which, in an attempt to maintain power and control, preached self-improvement and self-serving sacrifice instead of love. The Christian Church, in relating salvation to "good works" rather than to love of neighbours, by advocating hypocrisy, alienated people from God and contributed to the rise of atheism.⁸⁴

⁸¹DM., 105.

⁸²"Love means seeing the other in God and affirming him in eternal life; it is the radiation of energy needed for that eternal life. The Christian ethics of the Gospel is founded upon the recognition of the significance of each human soul which is worth more than all the kingdoms of this world. Personality has unconditional value as the image and likeness of God. No abstract idea of good can be put above personality." [DM, 107.]

⁸³DM., 114.

⁸⁴DM., 112.

Another blow to the ethics of redemption was levelled by the human inability to reconcile suffering with God's love. Even Christ, in the Garden of Gethsemane, doubted God's love, but as Christ found the strength to carry His own cross, so too must people.

Suffering is bound up with sin and evil...But it is also the way of redemption, of light and regeneration. Such is the Christian paradox with regard to suffering and it must be accepted and lived through. For a Christian to suffer means voluntarily to take up and bear his cross. Compulsory suffering must be accepted freely. Suffering is closely connected with freedom. To seek a life in which there will be no more suffering is to seek a life in which there will be no more freedom.⁸⁵

Berdyaev perceived that this element of Christianity had been best preserved in the Russian religious-philosophical tradition in which the fundamental *motif* of the God-man reconciled people to suffering, and thus to God and Christ. He found this concept more humane than the Western preoccupation with "personal salvation and self-improvement".⁸⁶ Thus, Berdyaev again advocated the merging of Russian and Western beliefs; the replacement of egocentric hypocrisy and fear of suffering by the eternal principle of Godmanhood.

The way to this new conception of humanity and its position in the world is discovered in the ethics of creativity. Berdyaev believed that man's purpose on earth was to create, and he saw man the creator as the true "image and likeness" of the Creator-God. The symbol of the Trinity explained the relationship between Berdyaev's ethics of creativity, law and redemption:

GOD) Law is predominantly social; it is concerned with maintaining society,

⁸⁵DM., 119.

⁸⁶DM., 122.

often at the expense of the individual's freedom. However it does allow all individuals life. Thus it protects the individual but it does not save him.

CHRIST) Redemption is concerned with the individual and grants him hope, wholeness, and value. Through the individual it may improve society but that is not its main concern. It gives grace to individuals.

HOLY SPIRIT) Creativeness comes from within each individual; like redemption it starts from man. But it is applied to society. Creativeness changes, improves, and tries to build a system of meaning in which both law and redemption can work better.⁸⁷

Creativity was both a link between law and redemption and a way to aspire towards God. Yet the act of creation was in itself a paradox: if people devoted all their energies to creation (as they did during the Renaissance), they became fragmented and lost their wholeness, their communion with God; if they did not create, but rather turned to asceticism and the improvement of their own souls (as they did during the Middle Ages), they were denying God's gift of creativity.⁸⁸ Berdyaev's New Middle Ages combined the best of the Renaissance with the best of the Middle Ages: people would continue to create, but they would introduce an element of spirituality, of asceticism, into the creative act.

The first, and most important creation that they must make was that of a new system of ethics; one that overcame and moved beyond the old divisions of law, redemption, and creativity:

Three new factors have appeared in the moral life of man and are acquiring an unprecedented significance. Ethics must take account of three new objects of human striving. Man has come to love *freedom* more than

⁸⁷DM., 133.

⁸⁸DM., 131.

he has ever loved it before, and he demands freedom with extraordinary persistence. He no longer can or wants to accept anything unless he can accept it freely. Man has grown more *compassionate* than before. He cannot endure the cruelty of the old days, he is pitiful in a new way to every creature - not only to the least of men but also to animals and to everything that lives. A moral consciousness opposed to pity and compassion is no longer tolerable. And, finally, man is more eager than ever before *to create*. He wants to find a religious justification and meaning for his creativeness. He can no longer endure having his creative instinct repressed either from without or from within. At the same time other instincts are at work in him, instincts of slavery and cruelty, and he shows a lack of creativeness which leads him to thwart it and deny its very existence. And yet the striving for freedom, compassion and creativeness is both new and eternal. Therefore the new ethics is bound to be an ethics of *freedom, compassion and creativeness*.⁸⁹

This new system of ethics would save mankind from the two anti-human destinies of Marx and Nietzsche, and from the paganist barbarism of fascism; it would be the destiny of Christ - the New Middle Ages.⁹⁰

⁸⁹DM., 153.

⁹⁰Berdyaev sought, not only the solution to the end of the Renaissance, but also a true realization of the Russian populist vision.

"We never knew or experienced individualism in the Western sense of the word, as formulated in the humanist civilization of Europe; but this did not prevent us from deeply appreciating the problem of the relation between personality and universal social harmony. No one, in fact, has stated this problem with such power and understanding as, for example, Dostoevsky or Belinsky. Russian populism, both of the left and of the right, the various religious and social movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Herzen and Mikhailovsky, Khomyakov and the Slavophiles, Vladimir Soloviev and Nikolai Fyodorov, Rozanov and Vyacheslav Ivanov, Bely and Florensky - all these, whatever the differences of their respective positions, were concerned with the relation of collective, organic and *sobornyi* culture to the individualistic culture of the West. But Russian practice was, more often than not, illustrative of distorted and falsified *sobornost'*. Thus Russian communism is a travesty of *sobornost'*, inasmuch as it subjects the creative freedom of man to the demands of a collectivized and mechanized society. And the Russians go on dreaming of *sobornost'* which would embody the integral freedom and communion in religious, social, political, and cultural relations. [D&R., 157.]

The practical parameters of the New Middle Ages arose from Berdyaev's system of ethics. The commitment to freedom would result in people going beyond the influences of family, church, nation, and every other social group to make their own moral judgements; "he must consider at first hand, in the light of his own conscience, the judgments of the social groups which influence him and separate the truth from falsity in them."⁹¹ Such responsible judgement would replace the "past commitment to lying" with "ontological truthfulness".⁹² Berdyaev explained that lying stemmed from a misalignment of the *means* with the *ends*. The *ends* had always been an abstract idea - the good of the state, the church, the people - made superior to the free individual; as preeminent, these *ends* justified any *means*; in order to prevent popular dissent with these *means*, the institution involved was compelled to lie. He pointed to the Soviet Union where the communists had "created a whole system of lying which they regard as a moral duty, since the object of it is the realization of world communism and the preservation of their own power which has become an end in itself".⁹³ In parliaments, members were so involved in lying for their own *means* that they could never agree on an *end*: "what is humanist Democracy if not an assertion of the right to error and falsehood, a political relativism, a sophistry, a giving-over of the decision of truth to the votes of a

⁹¹DM., 161.

⁹²DM., 163.

⁹³DM, 165.

majority?"⁹⁴ The cure which Berdyaev offered was to go beyond this system of *means* and *ends* and accept that no abstract idea can take precedence over human beings. Humanity must "build up an ethic of ontological truthfulness, to seek in everything for what is primary, first hand original, i.e. to seek for the source of life and power".⁹⁵ Moreover, the ethics of compassion demanded that no one be subjected as a *means* or to an *end*. People must appeal to their own conscience, "that aspect of man's most inmost nature which comes into contact with God and is receptive to His message and hears His voice".⁹⁶

Having accepted the responsibility to make their own free moral judgements, people would escape the dehumanizing temptations of fanatics. Moreover, in adhering to the ethics of compassion, they would be repulsed by the fanatic's message: "A fanatic is always an idealist in the sense that an idea means more to him than concrete human beings and that for the sake of the idea he is ready to oppress, torture, and kill others..."⁹⁷ Tolerance, "a considerate attitude to human souls and their path in life which is always complex and painful", would supersede the fear of otherness, heresy hunting, and suspicion.⁹⁸ Here, Berdyaev was explicitly referring to the Christian Church. He believed that Christianity was the force leading to his New Middle Ages, yet he was

⁹⁴NMA, 87., and DM., 164.

⁹⁵DM., 166.

⁹⁶DM., 167.

⁹⁷DM., 170.

⁹⁸DM., 173.

aware of the Church's failings: "a creative completion of Christian ethics is particularly necessary".⁹⁹ The Church had interpreted "love for one's neighbour" as a means of salvation and an "ascetic exercise in virtue", but "love cannot be merely a means to salvation and redemption. Love is the creation of a new life"¹⁰⁰ The Church, through its fear of anarchy and its passion to rule had been guilty of the same idolatry as Marx and Nietzsche: it had placed its love of abstract ideas before its love of humanity.¹⁰¹

This censure also applied to the power and position of the state which was itself an abstract idea and not a living person. The sacrifice of people to the state would be inconceivable in Berdyaev's New Middle Ages. He did not suggest that the state should be dismantled: "the people cannot govern itself. it must be governed".¹⁰² But he

⁹⁹DM., 188. Berdyaev's reform of the Christian Church applied equally to all its manifestations: Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant: "Man had been left with only his bodily envelope and the lesser faculties of his soul; he could no longer see the dimension of depth. The Orthodox Church began this deprivation when she relegated spiritual life to another and transcendent world and created a religion for the soul that was home-sick for the spiritual life it had lost. This process could only lead to positivism, gnosticism, and materialism, that is, to the utter despiritualization of man and his universe." [DOS., 36.]

"If the Church wields authority by driving me into conformity with the collective consciousness of ecclesiastical society, I find myself against the same kind of phenomenon as the ugly but very instructive Moscow trials of the veteran Communists." [Berdyaev, "Marx versus Man" in RP3, 174,175]

¹⁰⁰DM., 188.

¹⁰¹Love of ideas and values, of truth, goodness and beauty, is merely the unconscious and imperfect expression of the love for God and the Divine. One ought to love God more than man, and the love for God ought to give us strength to love man. We may have to sacrifice love of our neighbours to the love of God. But we must not sacrifice the love for our neighbours, for living beings, for God's creation for the sake of purely abstract ideas of justice, beauty, truth, humility and so on. [DM, 190.]

¹⁰²NMA., 114.

advocated a social organization "in which the principles of personality, society and the state interact and mutually limit one another, giving the individual the greatest possible freedom of creative spiritual life"¹⁰³ Political parties and leaders would no longer possess such "apparent importance"; parliaments would be disbanded as "parasitical growths on the body politic"; the stock-exchange and media would no longer "control the world".

Social life will be simplified; making an honest living will require a lower standard and less artificiality. It is likely that men will form themselves into unified groups, not under political emblems.. but according to professional categories of trade, art, and other work, spiritual and material... Instead of political 'talking-shops' we shall have assemblies of professionals representing real bodies, not intriguing for political power but bent upon dealing with vital matters - for themselves and not in the interests of parties.¹⁰⁴

People would receive as much freedom as possible while still remaining a part of society "in communion with others" The New Middle Ages would be "of the people", but it would not be democratic because "democracies are inseparable from middle-class domination and the industrial-capitalist system".¹⁰⁵ Instead, Berdyaev envisioned peasants and the proletariat moving toward "corporate professional representation" - *sobornost'* - "living associations, professional economic and spiritual".¹⁰⁶ Above all,

¹⁰³DM., 199.

¹⁰⁴NMA., 112.

¹⁰⁵DM., 199.

¹⁰⁶NMA, 114.

the state must "become religious, not by external constraint but freely and from within".¹⁰⁷

This strong Christian commitment impelled Berdyaev to condemn capital punishment. In concurrence with the Russian Slavophiles, he maintained that "capital punishment is murder pure and simple".¹⁰⁸ Although this murder is not committed by a specific human being, the state performs the execution, "the whole people inflict it, in so far as they demand capital punishment and approve of it". Berdyaev was repelled by the cold and innumane expression of this "murder", but his main charge was against the state "overstepping its legitimate boundaries". Using the Slavophile argument, he insisted that "human life belongs to God, and not to man, and the final settlement of human destiny...is outside the province of the state".¹⁰⁹

Finally, Berdyaev saw no unquestionable sanctity in the realm of marriage and the family. The only profound aspect of the Orthodox marriage service, he asserted, was the "comparison of marriage crowns to martyrs' crowns. For in a true marriage that has meaning, husband and wife have to suffer and bear each other's burdens..."¹¹⁰ The family, too, he saw as a place of succour, where burdens were shared and thus lightened,

¹⁰⁷Berdyaev reiterated his plea once given to the Russian intelligentsia in *Vekhi*: humans must look for "the foundation and strengthening of State and society in religion." [NMA, 105.]

¹⁰⁸Constantine Aksakov wrote, "Death penalty is legalized murder, but murder nevertheless...And when you say a criminal cannot repent, you are judging the soul of man, a judgment which belongs only to God." [Riasanovsky, 142.]

¹⁰⁹DM., 205.

¹¹⁰DM., 234.

but he also believed that a time would come when it was right to leave the family behind, just as there was a time to return to it.¹¹¹ In all judgments, family relations should be a matter of personal conscience and a personal decision - there was no correct way to conduct these relations.

This social program demanded the creation of a new person. Berdyaev recalled the medieval symbols of the saint, the knight, and the monk as the highest aspirations in his new age. The knight and the monk enshrined nobility, loyalty, devotion and sacrifice to faith and duty; the saint was that one who attained the highest point that the new spiritual man could reach.¹¹² Berdyaev's system of ethics was designed for a new coterie of knights, monks, and eventually saints:

Ethics must defend the ideal image of man as a personality, as a free and original being, having access to the first sources of beings, and oppose all attempts to derive that image from the herd-life. The ideal image of man is first and foremost that of an ideal personality. Ideal society is based upon personality. A spiritual society is a reality, but it does not exist apart from persons. The ideal human personality is one in which the image and likeness of God are fully revealed. The ideal image of man is the image of God in him. And that image embraces the whole nature of man and not certain aspects of it only.¹¹³

Thus the New Middle Ages was designed for the new personal man who would replace the materialist, natural man, could live by Berdyaev's new system of ethics, and would lead humanity away from the apocalyptic ends of Marx and Nietzsche towards a responsible, "better" world. This was Berdyaev's personalist philosophy.

¹¹¹DM., 238.

¹¹²DM., 243.

¹¹³DM., 243.

Chapter 4. Sobornost': The Personalist Doctrine.

The French personalists elaborated a complex blueprint for a new France. Although their doctrine left many details to be decided by the future persons who would form the nucleus of their new society, it did describe a concrete political and economic plan. In concurrence with their philosophy of the primacy of the spiritual, the personalists asserted that politics would be subordinated to spirituality; the spiritual well-being of every human was more important than material comforts and prosperity. The primary goal of personalism was to encourage and educate people to discover their spiritual potential and become persons. To insure the inviolable rights of each person, the personalist doctrine included the *statut interconfédéral de la personne*. This would be a political charter similar to the American Bill of Rights. The *statut interconfédéral de la personne* enshrined the liberty, spirituality, and life of the person, and it would apply to every future personalist *patrie*; abuses to the charter would be dealt with by a central authority controlled by the spiritual elite.¹

Because communion with other people was perceived as necessary for the full development of the person, the personalists advocated the formation of small, integrated communities: *patries*. The *patrie* was modeled upon the Russian *mir*: it would be organic, reflect the character of its composite members, and be "l'expression d'un contact

¹Mounier, "Manifeste au service du personnalisme." OE., 615-619.

channel, sentimental entre l'homme et le milieu dans lequel il vit".² This was a direct transmission of the Russian idea of *sobornost'*:

Sobornost' creates a dialectical tension between the welfare of the community and the welfare of the individual, ensuring the sanctity of both. This situation is realized in the *obshchina* which the Slavophiles considered, "... the highest form of social, moral, and political organization because it emphasises the primacy of the social over the individual and yet guarantees the freedom of the individual, as a part of, not apart from, the community."³

Berdyayev expounded the theory of *sobornost'* in his many philosophical works, and Marc received the idea from Belinsky:

...society or a nation is not an abstract concept but a living individual, indivisible in body and soul: that is born not contingently, not of human convention and will, but of the will of God... Society consists of people, of whom each belongs both to himself and to society, is both an individual, an end in himself and a member of society, a part of the whole, who belongs not to himself but to society.⁴

Thus the French personalist doctrine insisted that, "the primary action of the person, therefore, is to sustain, together with others, a society of persons, the structure, the customs, the sentiments and the institutions of which are shaped by their nature as persons."⁵

Despite the Slavophile and Populist idealization of the *mir*, *sobornost'* was an accurate description of the *narod's* conception of their community. In their proverbs, the

²The *patrie* provides, "La défense de l'homme contre le déracinement, contre tout retour offensif de l'Étatisme, contre tous les "mécanismes oppresseurs"... A. Marc, "Le Christianisme et la révolution spirituelle." *Esprit*. (Mar. 1933)., 969.

³RP1., 163.

⁴Belinsky as cited in Marc, Diary, June 14, 1919.

⁵Mounier, Personalism., 21.

narod attributed the following characteristics to the *mir*:

God alone directs the Mir.
The Mir is great.
The Mir is the surging billow
The neck and shoulders of the Mir are broad.
Throw everything upon the Mir, it will carry it all.
The Mir sighs, and the rock is rent asunder.
A thread of the Mir becomes a shirt for the naked.
No one in the world can separate from the Mir
What belongs to the Mir belongs also to the mother's little son.
What is decided by the Mir must come to pass.
The Mir is answerable for the country's defense.⁶

As these proverbs suggest, the *mir* was not an objectified social institution to the *narod*, rather it was, in itself, a person. Both the *narod* and the intelligentsia who adulated the *mir* saw it as an organic, living body with strength, intelligence, and a soul.

The personalists indicated their acceptance of this Russian idea by calling the *patrie* a "personality of persons".⁷ Their groups, *L'Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit*, may be considered embryonic *patries*: united by a common purpose and similar ideologies, their members found security and were able, through discussion, to improve and develop their personal abilities.

La commune O.N. [*L'Ordre Nouveau*] est le groupement sur un territoire limité de ceux qu'unit une communauté de vie et d'esprit local. Ainsi les hommes qui la composent éprouvent le lien physique qui les unit au sol et le lien humain qui les unit entre eux.⁸

The major condition for the spontaneous formation of a *patrie* was therefore a similarity

⁶Baron von Haxthausen, The Russian Empire: its People, Institutions, and Resources. (London, 1856)., Vol. II, 229.

⁷Mounier, "Manifeste de Personnalisme." OE., 194.

⁸Lipiansky, 62.

in interests and vocation. This again resembled the actuality of the *mir* or *artel*'. Both were homogeneous communities: in the *mir*, the *narod* were involved in farming and husbandry and shared the same labour and burdens; in the *artel*', all members performed the same craft; if a person grew tired of this labour or was inept, he/she could be adopted or married into a new community - another *artel*' or the agricultural *mir*.⁹ Although the personalist intellectuals had more choice in their community, they sought the homogeneity fostered in the Russian *obshchina*.

The enduring appeal of the *obshchina* was partially engendered by the *narod*'s continued dignity, despite being subjected as serfs for centuries. Russian intellectuals who "went to the people" noted that the *narod*, "...united in their semi-patriarchal, semi-republican village communes, exhibited a great share of self-respect, and even capacity to stand boldly by their rights, where the whole commune was concerned".¹⁰ But to the alienated Russian intelligentsia, and to French intellectuals confronted with an atomized, urbanized society, it was the inherent sense of belonging of the *narod* which proved most alluring. Moreover, the *narod*'s close connection with the land, especially in the *mir*, corresponded to the French personalist aspirations to reunite "l'homme à la terre".¹¹

Size, location and the membership of the *patrie* were much less important considerations, although the personalists did warn that too small and closed a society

⁹von Haxthausen, Vol. 1., 56.

¹⁰Stepniak, The Russian Peasantry (London, 1905). 117.

¹¹Marc, La fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit* (Jan, 1933)., 567.

could result in moral tyranny and oppression.¹² The *obshchina*'s average size, between 51 and 300 inhabitants,¹³ may be regarded as the *patrie*'s minimum. Because *patries* were supposed to form spontaneously, the personalists did not attempt to delineate the specific forms which each should adopt. Rather they advocated diversity. French persons should form the *patrie* most suited to their needs and the conditions under which they lived. This flexibility was legitimized by the spontaneous diversity found in Russian *obshchinas*: a "simple *obshchina*" consisted of a single village which owned and cultivated that land contiguous to it; the "composite *obshchina*" encompassed several *mirs* which shared and cultivated the same land; the "distributed *obshchina*" occurred when several *mirs* held overlapping territory, but only one *mir* had the right to farm it. These last two forms occurred most frequently in north and northeastern Russia and fostered a greater degree of individuality. In the second instance repartition of land was often waived.¹⁴ Thus, as the *narod* had adapted their *obshchinas* to their needs and the environment in which they lived, so too could the future persons.

The personalist's were most attracted to the idea of autonomous, self-sufficient communities. Russian Law rarely interfered with the *mirs*¹⁵ and they were free to

¹²C. Chevalley & Alexandre Marc, "A la taille de l'homme: La Commune." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Apr. 1937)., 134-152.

¹³Jerome Blum, Lord and Peasant in Russia From the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century. (Princeton, 1961)., 506.

¹⁴Francis Waters, "The Peasant and the Village Commune." The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia. Ed., Wayne Vucinich. (Stanford, 1968)., 142.

¹⁵The *narod* did not have legal codes: Justice was administered according to peasant traditions [Stepniak, 127]. The *narod*'s system of justice bore little resemblance to Roman Law, "...and yet peace of the Russian countryside is never disturbed by complaints

manage all economic concerns in common:

the land,...the forests, the fisheries, the renting of public-houses standing on their territory, etc. They distribute among themselves as they choose, the taxes falling to the share of the commune according to the Government schedules. They elect the rural executive administration - *Starost* and *Starshina* - who are (nominally at least) under their permanent control.¹⁶

Each *mir* had its own council (*mirskoi skhod*)¹⁷ where internal disputes or changes would be decided: all adults participated in this council, but only the heads of each household were allowed to vote; if the patriarch could not be present, he appointed a proxy, which could be his wife, to vote in his stead. For minor decisions, a majority was required; crimes, movement, religion, and other important issues were decided with a two-thirds majority; land redistribution required unanimity.¹⁸

The *mir* recognises no restraint on its autonomy. In the opinion of the peasants themselves, the *mir's* authority embraces, indeed, all domains and branches of peasant life. Unless the police and the local officials are at hand to prevent what is considered an abuse of power, the peasants' *mir* is always likely

or litigation.... The petty differences that arise are quickly settled either by the elders or by the commune: everyone abides by such decisions without reservation". [Alexander Herzen, The Russian People and Socialism, (London, 1956), 183.]

¹⁶Stepniak., 127

¹⁷The *mirskoi skhod* was led by the *Starosta* (Old one) who was chosen by the *narod*. The heads of ten families would choose, from within the *obshchina*, ten assistants (*Decemvirs*) for the *Starosta*. The *Starosta* received a substantial salary, but the *Decemvirs* worked for free. In associated communes (*sel'skoe obshchestvo*) - generally existing on State, rather than private land and composed of several *obshchinas* - there was also a *Starshina*. He was elected from the ranks of the various *Starosta* by the heads of each family in the district. The *sel'skoe obshchestvo* could contain up to 500 or 600 families.[Haxthausen, vol. 1., 17.]

¹⁸Blum, 524.

to exceed its authority.¹⁹

For example, in 1884 a peasant Theodor made a petition to his *mir* council asking them to dissolve his former marriage (his wife had run away several years before) and accept another woman as his new wife and as a member of the *mir*. The council decided that, as Theodor needed a wife - no man should live alone - and as his first wife was to blame for his present situation, his request should be granted. Ignoring Russian state and religious laws, they annulled all rights and claims of his first wife, dissolved that marriage, remarried him and legitimized his new wife's children.²⁰

Like the *mirskoi skhod*, the *patries* should recognize no external authority and their rules and traditions would be unanimously decided by those affected by them; the *patrie* would act as the centre of administration and justice; no "outside" force should determine people's rights.²¹ Together, the members of a *patrie* would decide on the communal budget, the customs to be enshrined, the election of administrative officials and their authority over civil matters, and the regulation of disputes between members except when they affected the status of the person. In short, each *patrie* would control the civil and administrative matters pertaining to its community autonomously.

The *Conseil communal* (an equivalent of the *mirskoi skhod*), which would govern

¹⁹Stepniak, 132.

²⁰Stepniak, 133.

²¹"L'autonomie de la région [*patrie*] doit être développée jusqu'à sa limite extrême: cette limite, c'est l'intérêt suprême de la Révolution. *Dans la mesure où elle ne paralyse point l'élan révolutionnaire, la région doit jouir d'une indépendance absolue.*" Marc & Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit.*, (Nov. 1932)., 319.

each *patrie*, was to be selected by one of three methods: an election by all members of the community, irrespective of sex; nomination from the federal, central council; or cooptation.²² The first and third methods would be the most commonly used depending on whether the specific *patrie* agreed with universal suffrage or decided that nomination by a few or by the pre-existing *Conseil* was more appropriate for their particular situation. The second method was included as a restraining method which the central government could apply in situations where a *patrie* was abusing the rights of the persons within its community.

The French personalist doctrine encouraged the family and advocated its maintenance as: "...the place of contact between public and private affairs, combining a certain range of social relations with a certain intimacy. It socialises the private life while it interiorises the life of manners and customs. Through this mediatory function, the family becomes an essential factor in the personal universe."²³ As the Slavophiles supported the family as a repository of tradition - "the family forged bonds of love in time as well as in space, it united successive generations and made tradition and society possible"²⁴ - the personalists emphasized the importance of family life in developing a child's conception of human relations, in transmitting past traditions, and in encouraging the first steps towards a spiritual person. However, personalists were aware of the potential for family despotism and regarded the

²²Cooptation - "ce principe de nomination qui ne laisse qu'une place limitée au suffrage et retenu pour toutes les institutions." [Lipiansky, 63.]

²³Mounier, Personalism, 107.

²⁴Peter Christoff, An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Slavophilism. Vol 1., (Mouton, 1961), 132.

patrie, with its close ties to and involvement in each family, as a necessary corrective.²⁵

Again the similarity of this view to the natural conditions in the *mir* is striking: the *mirskoi skhod's* jurisdiction over marriage, wills, land, and religion²⁶ served to limit the power of any one family member; it checked undesirable traits within members of the *mir*. The principle of "what is best for the *mir*" also influenced the nature of the family. Bastards and stepsons were considered equal to legitimate children.²⁷ Family decisions were made by the patriarch, who was usually the oldest male with full possession of his faculties, although it was not uncommon to find the eldest woman or a junior male actually in charge.²⁸ Women could not inherit land, but they did receive dowries which might consist of land or livestock. The family, until the emancipation of 1861, was large and extended: two or more married brothers, their children, and often their parents lived under one roof. When an adolescent married, he/she usually remained in the household.²⁹ This reduced the burden and responsibility of raising a family and managing the farm. The

²⁵Mounier, Personalism, 107.

²⁶As late as the seventeenth century, the *mir* elected its own priest and paid negligible attention to bishops. Although this practice was rarely exercised in the nineteenth century, the *narod* still reserved the right to remove their resident *Pop* [priest] if they did not like his approach. They could also alter the accepted creed: when a dissenting preacher arrived they would hear him speak, debate his message, and if they liked it, they would bring the matter before the *mirskoi skhod*. With a unanimous vote, the *mir* would turn *shaloput* and adopt the new creed as their own. [Stepniak, 134, 135.]

²⁷Stepniak, 129, 130.

²⁸Mary Matossian, "The Peasant Way of Life" The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Ed., W. Vucinich. (Stanford, 1968.), 17.

²⁹Matossian., 18.

sheer material value of the family often precluded blood restrictions.³⁰ Families might be composed of distant cousins, the offspring of in-laws, and even outright strangers.

...the Russian cannot live without a strong family tie; if he has none, he invents one; if he has no father, he searches for and chooses one for himself, and has the same veneration and affection for him as for a parent. In the same way, if he has no children of his own, he adopts some.³¹

With such conventions, the *mir* limited the social oppression of "unfortunates"; these traditions made it difficult to disparage a bastard and self-defeating to abuse women. Rather, a certain tolerance and a form of sexual equality were enshrined.

On marriage, the personalists remained rather vague. They did emphasize that children were essential for a fulfilling union between two people, and they did encourage a "less sordid view of sex",³² but they did not delineate a program concerning the status of legitimacy or family composition. As in most matters, they left these decisions to the will of the *patrie*.

³⁰Extended families were partially promoted by Russia's taxation system. Instead of paying individual tax, the family paid a *tiaglo* (tax on a unit of labour); each able-bodied labourer equalled one *tiaglo*, and an adult son added a new *tiaglo* to the family upon his marriage; once a family had two *tiagla* then they were granted two plots of land by the *mir*. Thus, the family could increase its holdings with each marriage as long as the married couple remained in one residence.[Blum, 514] This system could also benefit the *obshchina*. The *obrok* or corvée was determined as a lump sum for the entire *obshchina*. The amount paid, or land worked was divided among all the *obshchina's tiagla*. Therefore, if there were more *tiagla*, each member either owed less, or was obliged to work less.[Haxthausen, vol.1., 122.] In sociological terms, this system made marriage and large families living together communally very popular.

Haxthausen compares this situation to the prevalent system in Europe: "In Western Europe, among the lower classes, a large family is a burden; to the Russian peasant it constitutes the greatest wealth: the sons always bring an increase in land, and the daughters are so much sought after that a portion is rarely required. Hence the vast increase of the population..." [Ibid., 123.]

³¹Haxthausen, vol.1., 103.

³²Mounier, Personalism, 108, 109.

Inspired by Bakunin's federalism,³³ the French personalist doctrine regarded the nation as "large" families, offering both closeness (belonging) and social opportunities (more diversity than the *patrie*). Their nation would not be a source of racial or cultural supremacy. Arising spontaneously from a federation of *patries*, the nation would provide, "a corrective to the vital egoism of individuals and of families, of the domination of the state, and of servility towards cosmopolitan economic interests."³⁴ Three essential characteristics of federalism were elaborated by *L'Ordre Nouveau*:

- 1) Il part de groupements humains limités, donc cohérents et compétents, parce que n'excédant pas les possibilités d'expérience et d'activité d'un homme,
- 2) Il permet à ces groupements limités de se fédérer selon des associations, non pas arbitraires ou hiérarchiques, mais déterminés par leur activité et leur existence mêmes;
- 3) Il subordine à ces groupements et à ces associations un certain nombre d'organismes communes d'exécution et de coordination, que l'on peut appeler organismes d'état.³⁵

Politically, the Nation would simply be a place where the *patries* could compare their actions and progress with each other. The only political jurisdiction of the Nation would be in areas that would otherwise fall into chaos: the postal service, customs, and the military.³⁶

This conception of "nation" resembles the Slavophile's mystical notion of the *narod*:

³³Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) advocated the complete dissolution of the State and Church and their replacement by a spontaneous federation of autonomous communities. Bakunin, The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State. (London, 1971). Marc read Bakunin and cited him in his diary [Diary, Jan. 4, 1921]; *L'Ordre Nouveau*'s articles on federalism referred directly to Bakunin and *Esprit* also quoted him. See Mounier, "Anarchie et Personnalisme." OE., 653-728.

³⁴Mounier, Personalism., 110.

³⁵"Planism et plan" *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (July, 1935), 1226.

³⁶Roy, 104.

that it was the people who defined Russia and it was their mentality, not their race, creed, or class that evoked patriotism.³⁷ The *narod* also possessed an intercommune council, the *Volost*. Nearby *obshchinas* or Associated Communes would chose one representative for the *Volost* at a general assembly - usually ten *obshchinas* would be involved. The head of the *Volost* was the *Golova* who had jurisdiction over all civil and criminal (except capital) offenses for every member in the region; only one party in a dispute needed to be from that region.³⁸ The practical reality of the *Volost*, provided the same "corrective" as would the personalist Nation.

Composed of a federation of *patries*, the Nation would be governed by a constrained, highly limited state.³⁹ The personalists agreed with Berdyaev and acknowledged that the state was necessary to prevent social disorder, but "l'existence de l'état représente une menace constante dirigée contre l'indépendance de ces groupements [*patries*] et la liberté des personnes qui les composent."⁴⁰ In order to minimize this risk, the personalists adopted the Slavophile approach to state control:

...the first relationship between the government and the people is a relationship of *mutual non-interference* ...Defense in general is the meaning and duty of the state. Its guardianship consists in providing greater comforts of life and not in managing it...Its entire virtue must consist in its *negative* character,

³⁷ORC, 30.

³⁸Haxthausen, vol.1., 17.

³⁹Personalism was not anarchy. They did not accept Bakunin's theory that correctly motivated societies did not need a state, but they did try to limit state oppression.

⁴⁰A. Marc, "L'état sans majuscule." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (Oct. 1934)., 921.

so the less it exists as a state, the better it accomplishes its aim..."⁴¹

As an alternative to the centralized state, the personalists advocated a state structure modeled on that of the United States and, in concurrence with their spiritual emphasis, a state whose authority, "en tant que créatrice et initiatrice, est essentiellement spirituelle", rather than a state whose power, "en tant qu'institution est naturellement matériel" ⁴² The central body would be the executive *Conseil suprême* composed of members elected or coopted from each *patrie*. Under this central council would be two legislative branches, *Conseil administratif fédéral* and *Conseil économique fédéral*. The first would legislate laws to ensure the primacy of the person and to alleviate inter-*patrie* rivalries; the second would regulate the national economy and represent the interests of different syndicates and corporations internationally.⁴³

The *Conseil suprême* would be a separate body in the government, the highest power and the court of last appeal (like the Supreme Court in the United States). Its authority would counteract the power of the two lesser bodies by acting as "garant des libertés personnelles contre les tyrannies administratives".⁴⁴ These checks indicate the pragmatism of the personalists: ideally they intended that their state would be composed of a spiritual elite who "will govern always for the good of all citizens and their education, and will not seek the suppression

⁴¹I. Kireevsky as cited in Riasanovsky, 151. This conception of the state appealed to Marc: his experience with the Bolshevik "autocracy" led him to embrace Nietzsche's attack against the "cold inhumanity" of the State. Marc remained committed to the dismantling of all centralized, despotic, faceless governments. [Diary, March 17, 1919]

⁴²"L'autorité assure les libertés." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1937), 327.

⁴³"L'autorité assure les libertés." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1937), 329-332.

⁴⁴"L'autorité assure les libertés." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1937), 332.

of the minority"; however they recognized the temptation of power and the will to rule.⁴⁵

At first, the personalist revolutionaries would govern the state. Beginning with their embryonic *patries* - *l'Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit* - they would gradually branch out through France and add more communities to their personalist nation. The revolutionary elite would:

Pousser à l'extrême, l'automatisme dans la zone colonisée [patries] pour éviter à l'homme le plus grand nombre possible d'efforts périmeés et lui faire tirer ainsi le profit le plus grand des victoires déjà remportées et des conquêtes déjà faites. Ainsi délivrer la faculté créatrice et les forces personnelles en les concentrant sur les conquêtes nouvelles, qui se présentent sans cesse à la zone non colonisée.⁴⁶

Once the nation was created, the revolutionaries would remain in power to carry out the complete transformation of the state.

Le "Comité de vigilance spirituelle" ne doit à aucun prix être confondu avec l'organe exécutif d'un super-état quel-conque. Il est appelé à veiller sur l'intransigeance et la pureté de l'élan révolutionnaire, à le préserver des tentations et des erreurs dont l'histoire montre tant d'exemples, et à assurer l'application et l'épanouissement du statut de la personne.⁴⁷

Eventually, a new spiritual elite would be trained to replace them and the system of election and cooption would be launched. Another check upon the power of the state was the insistence that people evoke their natural sovereignty. Having already encouraged maximum political participation in the *patrie*, the personalists insisted that every person serve at least once in the social service of the *patrie* or the nation.⁴⁸ They also asserted that it was the person's responsibility to meet and protest through strikes and boycotts any abuse of

⁴⁵Mounier, Personalism, 114.

⁴⁶Robert Aron & Arnaud Dandieu, La révolution nécessaire, 219.

⁴⁷A. Marc & R. Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit*. (Nov, 1932) 320.

⁴⁸Marc & Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932), 323.

state power.⁴⁹

Finally, the personalists advocated the strict rule of law as the ultimate protection of the person's rights. Concurring with Berdyaev, they disliked the impersonal, statist conception of the existing liberal laws, but they recognized that law is essential in any social organization. Their *conseil suprême* was only a minor legal body, it did not possess the power to resolve "le conflit inévitable entre l'ordre et la liberté, entre l'unité et la diversité" ⁵⁰ Instead, they wanted the people to embody the law. Alexandre Marc elaborated the personalist conception of the law's role:

Il assure un minimum indispensable d'ordre et de sécurité, il fournit une base stable et solide, une armature intrinsèque, aux "édifices" dans lesquels s'incarne l'activité humaine, aux groupements humains diversifiés. Il fournit enfin, un tremplin d'où s'élanceront les conquêtes et les créations spirituelles nouvelles, dans la mesure où il permet de revenir à la source personnelle de l'éthique dont la violence même brise l'horizon du droit ⁵¹

This law would not be maintained nor implemented solely by the state, but rather by local communities and persons.

The decentralization of law was again modeled upon the *obshchina*. The *narod* not only ignored Russian law and its jurisdiction over them, but also frequently practiced their customary law through the meetings of the *mirskoi skhod* and *Volost*!

The *mir* forms indeed a *microcosm*, a small world of its own. The people living in it have to exercise their judgement on everything, on the moral side of man's life as on the material, shaping it so as to afford to their small communities as much peace and happiness as is possible under their very

⁴⁹Mounier, Personalism, 115.

⁵⁰"L'autorité assure les libertés." *L'Ordre Nouveau*. (May, 1937),. 338.

⁵¹Lipiansky, 66.

arduous circumstances.⁵²

The *narod* were not saints: they were as selfish as any, but the *mir*, did not allow "bad elements" to flourish; in having to constantly exercise moral judgements on their neighbours, the *narod* became tolerant: "with the Russian *mir* the law is nowhere, the 'conscience' is everywhere."⁵³ They never attached a social stigma to criminals, or showed them contempt; rather they felt sorry for them. In the peasant vocabulary, criminal was not associated with bad or evil, merely with the generic term "unhappy". As Gogol wrote: "of all nations, the Russian alone is convinced that there exists no man who is absolutely guilty, as there exists no man who is absolutely innocent."⁵⁴ Moreover, the French personalists agreed with the Russian Slavophiles that customary laws were more just and appropriate than centralized, abstract codes:

Custom, unwritten and unarmed, is the expression of the most basic unity of society. It is as closely connected with the personality of a people as the habits of life are connected with the personality of a man. The broader the sphere of custom, the stronger and healthier the society, and the richer and more original the development of its jurisprudence.⁵⁵

So too did the personalists advocate customary laws based on precedence and jurisprudence instead of centralized "state" law.⁵⁶

⁵²Stepniak, 135.

⁵³Stepniak, 139.

⁵⁴Gogol, cited in Stepniak, 143.

⁵⁵A. Khomyakov cited in Riasanovsky, 143.

⁵⁶Jean LaCroix "Le sens de l'évolution juridique." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933)., 653-665. Mounier described the pre-requisites for the protection of the person as: "public and statutory recognition of the person and constitutional limitation of the powers of the State; a balance between the central and the local authorities; the established right of appeal by the citizen against

With such a return of power to the particular from the general, the personalists opposed the concept of the Nation-State; the right to rule lay only in the hands of the person. The idea of the Nation-State had divided the people of the world and national sovereignty had become a synonym for dogmatism and exclusion. The personalist *Weltanschauung* called for the creation of a European federation based upon the same federalist principles as was their Nation.

Fédéralisme: C'est la patrie concrète, c'est-à-dire la région qui est l'élément constitutif et le fondement réel de notre fédéralisme... Nous avons déjà montré ailleurs que la région était le "climat" et la défense naturels de l'homme de chair et de sang. Il faut donc que cette maternelle gardienne de la richesse et de l'originalité de l'homme puisse opposer une digue à toute tentative de tyrannie centraliste.⁵⁷

The political platform of the French personalists envisioned the gradual realignment of the world: first the person would be developed; to facilitate and encourage the development of more persons, spontaneous homogeneous communities would arise; these would then form a decentralised federation called "Nation"; and finally the federation would extend through Europe and perhaps throughout the world. At *Plans*, in 1931, *l'Ordre Nouveau* introduced the *Front unique de la jeunesse européenne* which called for:

"Retour à l'homme réel"; "fédéralisme"; "élaboration d'un Plan européen" subordonné aux "besoins réels et sains" et à la "liberté de la consommation". Pour construire une Europe logique et libre, pour établir un système économique organisé, éliminant l'injustice sociale, pour sauver l'Esprit, formons le front unique révolutionnaire de la jeunesse.⁵⁸

the State; *habeas corpus*, limitation of the powers of the police, and the independence of the judicial authority." [Mounier, *Personalism*, 113.]

⁵⁷Marc & Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932), 318.

⁵⁸Lipiansky, 15.

In France, the front included *L'Ordre Nouveau*, *Plans*, *Réaction*, *Combat*,⁵⁹ and *Esprit*. Marc also made several connections with youth movements in Germany, Belgium, and Britain in order to expand their cause against "the established disorder".⁶⁰

The idea of a loose federation of autonomous communities was elucidated by the Russian populists and made famous by the anarchist Bakunin. The Slavophiles advocated the reform of Russia into a loose amalgamation of federated *obshchinas*⁶¹ united under a weak, patriarchal Tsar: their own class was to aid this transformation and then leave their "unnatural" life and go forward to a new personal integrity fostered within the *obshchina*.⁶² However, the Slavophiles were predominantly concerned with Russia, and committed to reform, not to a complete renovation of existing systems of government. Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) transposed this idea onto a world-wide canvas. An ardent opponent of State and Church control, Bakunin suggested that man's model should be Satan, "the eternal

⁵⁹*Combat* was merely a front for the members of *L'Ordre Nouveau*. It was a means to increase their input and influence in the movement. [Lipiansky, 13.]

⁶⁰Lipiansky, 14.

⁶¹The Slavophiles considered the *obshchina* to be Russia's original social structure and a uniquely organic community. They substantiated this claim with Baron von Haxthausen's The Russian Empire: its People, Institutions, and Resources. (1848). Von Haxthausen was a German sociologist and a fervid monarchist. Nicholas I invited him to do a study of Russian society, especially the *obshchina*; Nicholas I intended that von Haxthausen's study would legitimize the institution of serfdom, and put an end to all demands for the emancipation of the serfs. His plan backfired. Von Haxthausen provided a detailed and complementary portrait of the *obshchina*, and asserted that it was a specifically Slavic institution. He also concluded that serfdom would have to be abolished if Russia was to compete economically with Europe. He proposed that the *obshchina* remain as an institution and autonomously govern its members. [von Haxthausen, vol. 1., XIX, 27-36, 120, 128.]

⁶²Riasanovsky, Chapter 4., 91-156.

rebel, first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds".⁶³ He refused to consider any compromise with the present order and ridiculed all reformist ideas. The revolution must occur from the bottom up and remove all vestiges of the State and Church power. Then a free association of workers in communes, then regions, nations, and finally "a great international and universal federation" would naturally occur.⁶⁴

As in political matters, the personalists intended that economic decisions would be regulated by the *patrie*: "*c'est la région qui exerce également le droit de propriété sur toutes les richesses que servent de moyens de production*".⁶⁵ Marc adopted this idea from Victor Chernov during his involvement with the Socialist Revolutionaries.

They [the SRs] rejected as historically false the proposition that only powerful states could breed good or happy citizens, and as morally unacceptable the proposition that to lose oneself in the life and welfare of one's society is the highest form of individual self-fulfilment.⁶⁶

The SRs' program favoured the maximum decentralization of power in Russia: each *obshchina* would establish its own form of self-government which would be loosely supervised by a central authority. Aware of the conditions and needs of their locale, the *obshchinas* could determine how much land was needed to support the populace, collect the gross income from agriculture, and then redistribute it among each member. Hired labour was to be strictly prohibited. The role of the central government was only to guard against gross

⁶³V.G. Bakunin, God and the State. (New York, 1970.), 10. Bakunin not only shunned the existing forms of government, but also the revolutionary programs of Marx and Lassalle which advocated "state socialism". [Walicki, 275.]

⁶⁴Bakunin, Paris Commune and the Idea of the State., 1

⁶⁵Marc & Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932), 322.

⁶⁶Berlin, 230.

strictly prohibited. The role of the central government was only to guard against gross regional differences and inter-regional disputes.⁶⁷

Chernov founded his revolution upon the *obshchina* because it had fostered a collective, but autonomous system since the Kievan period. Although the *obshchina* took diverse forms, certain standard customs were adhered to: the common use of forests, pastures, and rivers, and the communal sharing of obligations and profits.⁶⁸ Generally, the *obshchina* consisted of plots of land which each family tilled and harvested, and common or shared land of meadows, forests and pastures. Strict rules applied to common land: a peasant could not dig up and take any piece of common land without the agreement of the entire community.⁶⁹ So binding was the communal nature that when peasants migrated to new lands they did so in companies (the Steppes were vast and the common farming technique was to use one area of land only until it became unproductive; they then moved to a new one). When first settling in a new area, the people frequently lived communally until separate family homes could be built.⁷⁰ In the northern areas, where forests had to be cut and farming required more effort, the communities were usually permanent. In the tenth century, territorial communes began to replace the smaller family and patriarchal organizations. Although still bound by mutual need and similar interests, these *obshchinas* were diverse and less interdependent. Families lived separately in their own dwellings and worked individually;

⁶⁷Oliver Radkey, The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism. (New York, 1962), 27.

⁶⁸Howard P Kennard. The Russian Peasant. (London, 1907)., 166.

⁶⁹Maxime Kovalevsky, Modern Customs and Ancient Laws of Russia. (London, 1891)., 77.

⁷⁰Kovalevsky, 78.

each farmer usually owned his own equipment and animals. However, they maintained the common use of pastures and forests, and shared communal obligations.⁷¹

Due to its unique historical development, Russia maintained this system until the twentieth century. In a country which was invaded thirty-two times, and changed its form of government almost every century, the *obshchina* provided a reassuring continuity. As the Russian legal historian, Kovalevsky suggested: "...the village communities [*obshchinas*] represent a distinct period in the social development of mankind, a period which ought to be placed between the patriarchal and feudal periods.. "⁷² Thus the Slavic communal society was probably not a function of racial trait or religious belief,⁷³ rather it was a consequence of fate: the *obshchina* could not provide immunity from wars, serfdom and taxation, but it did offer support and brotherhood to mitigate the worst depredations; the *narod* stayed in the *obshchina* because alone he would die.

Despite the harsh reality of the *narod's* situation, the Russian populists found their communal redistribution of wealth extremely appealing. In fact, as socialism gained popularity in Europe, the populists suggested that the *obshchina* serve as its model:

...Europe, now on the point of taking the first step forward in a social revolution, is confronted by a country that can provide an actual instance of an attempt - a crude, barbaric attempt perhaps, but still an attempt of a sort - in the direction of the division of the land amongst those who work it. And observe that this lesson is provided not by civilized Russia but by the people themselves in their daily lives. We Russians who have absorbed European civilization cannot hope to be more than a means to an end - the yeast in the leavening -

⁷¹Blum, 25

⁷²Kovalevsky, 72.

⁷³This was the argument of the Slavophiles and von Haxthausen.

a bridge between the Russian people and revolutionary Europe.⁷⁴

This was finally realized in the 1930s by Alexandre Marc who encouraged the French personalists to accept the Russian *obshchina* as the basic model for their *patrie*. In an interview, Marc clearly explained the influence of Russian ideas upon his ideology:

the *mir* was a bit of commune, and not only from the municipal point of view, but from the point of view of work. They worked together not because they were ordered to by someone, but rather because they organized themselves among themselves - the *mir*. And so for them to build socialism was to federate the different *mirs*, that is the different agricultural communes, and from there to build! And all of that attracted me. To such an extent that I have always stayed on the same path!⁷⁵

The communal sharing of profit and financial obligations would immediately undermine the capitalist system. However, the personalists also accepted, to a degree, the *mir*'s approach to private property as the ultimate cure to atomizing capitalism. The Roman tradition in Europe had allowed the owner of land almost total autonomy: as lord and master he could exploit his workers, remove people from their homes, and subject tenants to a life of squalor; private property gave profit supremacy over human dignity. This situation divided people between owners and non-owners, rich and poor, haves and have-nots, and personalism was trying to bring men together; it was,

the affirmation of the *unity of mankind*, both in space and time, which was foreshadowed by certain schools of thought in the latter days of antiquity and confirmed in the Judeo-Christian tradition....The conception of a human race with a collective history and destiny, from which no individual destiny

⁷⁴Herzen, The Russian People and Socialism; An Open Letter to Jules Michelet., 189, 190.

⁷⁵Interview, 7a-333, 7a-334.

can be separated, is one of the sovereign ideas of the Fathers of the Church.⁷⁶

The *mir* fostered such unity by having no conception of private property: "the land belongs to the family or commune; each individual has only a claim to usufruct, to which all persons born in the Commune have an equal right."⁷⁷ This eliminated many disputes, and if two interests did clash, the "harder" worker was always favoured. The *mir* did not recognize primogeniture or family *seisin* over land: if a man died, his land was given to the best worker in the family, or to someone else if no such good worker could be found; there was no possibility of disinheriting one child as last wills would simply be annulled if they favoured the poorer worker.⁷⁸ Such a system obviously reduced internal family tensions by preventing disputes over succession, favouritism, and family despotism. It also continually strengthened the community by weeding out negative elements and encouraging positive ones. The *mir* also had a unique method for the redistribution of land which ensured that all families had equal access and rights. As ownership, as such, was invested in the entire *obshchina*, each male inhabitant was granted the right to use an equal share. The birth of each boy required a redivision of land, and the death of any man reverted his land back to the *obshchina*. Only the arable land was divided; forests, streams, hunting-grounds, and pasture were used in common.⁷⁹

The land is first divided, according to its quality, position, or general value, into sections, each possessing on the whole equal advantages; the sections

⁷⁶Mounier., Personalism., 30.

⁷⁷Haxthausen, vol.1., XVI.

⁷⁸Stepniak, 128., Haxthausen, XVI.

⁷⁹Haxthausen, vol.1., 119.

are then divided into as many portions, in long strips, as there are shares required, and these are taken by lot.⁸⁰

These redivisions took place at varying times (5 - 40 years) subject to the needs and dynamics of each *obshchina*.⁸¹ The whole *mir* would assemble, including the women and children, and everyone would have their say. "A very just spirit prevails, and disputes never occur. If too small a share is supposed to have fallen to any one, it is made up to him out of the reserve."⁸²

In this manner, the *mir* and *artel'* ensured that the *narod* always had employment and a home. One could choose to leave the security of the *mir*, but was always allowed to return. The German sociologist, von Haxthausen (1848), found this the most admirable trait of the *obshchina*. Aware of the growing problem of the proletariat and the unemployed in Europe, he applauded this system where "people without a home, land, or a proprietor to provide for them, people in general *vis à vis du rien* were unknown".⁸³ However, von Haxthausen was not blind to the disadvantages of the communal system, and especially the policy of repartition. Insecure in their possession, the *narod* had little incentive to invest in and improve their land.⁸⁴ Originally, this was not a problem; if the land became less fertile, the *mir* simply moved to a new location; but landlords, taxes and government restrictions

⁸⁰Haxthausen, vol.1., 119.

⁸¹Blum, 526, 527. Kachovolsky related the time between redistribution to geographic locale. He asserted that as one moved from east to west, such divisions occurred less frequently. In White Russia and the Ukraine, redistribution had often ceased entirely. [Waters, 142].

⁸²Haxthausen, vol.1., 119, [in footnote]

⁸³Haxthausen, vol.1., 57.

⁸⁴Haxthausen, vol.1., 124. Waters, 152.

halted the *narod's* mobility and gradually the *mir's* approach to agriculture led to decreasing production and economic distress.

The economic problems engendered by a complete negation of private property concerned the French personalists; they realized that people needed security in their land to improve it and to maximize production. However they were more troubled by the Berdyaev's warning that although private property divided humanity and was used to oppress people, it was also an expression of personal worth and independence. With no private property one becomes a "slave of society and the state which will deprive him as well of the freedom of thought, conscience and speech, of the right to move about and even of the right to live".⁸⁵ Berdyaev's solution was the conception of property as enshrined in the *obshchina* and advocated by both the Slavophiles and Victor Chernov of the Social Revolutionaries:

The absolute right of property belongs to God alone, the Creator of the world and of man, but certainly not to the creature⁸⁶...The right of private property must be morally recognized as a limited right, as the right to use but not to abuse. The right of property is justified by its creative result. The same limited right of property must be accorded to society, to free co-operations and to the state. The right of owning material things and economic goods must be divided and apportioned between the individual, the society and the state, and in all cases must be limited and functional.⁸⁷

Thus people should only occupy and use property. They should not ultimately own it, nor were they legitimized in abusing others through the use of that property.

Following Berdyaev's formula and Marc's populist approach, the French personalists

⁸⁵DM., 271.

⁸⁶Chernov equated land with air, it could not be possessed nor owned, it could only be used. [Oliver Radkey, "Chernov and Agrarian Socialism before 1918" Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought. Ed., Ernest Simmons. (Cambridge, 1955)., 69-71.

⁸⁷DM., 218.

advocated a property policy which strongly resembled that of Chernyshevsky (1828-1889).⁸⁸ Chernyshevsky's revolutionary dictatorship would divide Russia into State and private sections. The State lands would be controlled by the *obshchinas* and would guarantee land, food, and the basic necessities to all Russians. If a person wanted to improve his situation, he could leave the *obshchina* and purchase private property for his purposes. If he succeeded, he could profit from his efforts, but if he failed, he could return to his *obshchina* and obtain succour.⁸⁹ The French personalists called their property categories personal and anonymous. Personal lands, like Chernyshevsky's State lands, would belong to the *patrie* and every member would have the right to their use; as in the *obshchina* the people would share the obligations and the profits of this land among themselves. "Anonymous" property provided the alternative for the risk-taker to improve his livelihood and experiment with different modes of production; as long as the owner obeyed the central laws and did not oppress any other person with this property, he had an inalienable right to the land and was assured a degree of economic independence.⁹⁰

To further dismantle the capitalist system, the personalists intended to eliminate

⁸⁸ Although Chernyshevsky endorsed the *obshchina*, he did not consider it superior to Western capitalist development. Rather, he believed that Russia was so "backward" that its entrance into world economic system in the 1860s coincided with capitalism's decay in Europe. As Europe was about to enter the next phase of evolution (post-capitalist collectivism) it would be better for Russia to simply skip the capitalist phase, go directly to communism, and then attempt to "catch-up" with Europe's superior industrial capacity by building on the latter's achievements.[Franco Venturi, The Roots of Revolution. (London, 1960)., 147-150., Walicki, 199-200.]

⁸⁹Chernyshevsky, in Stuart Tompkins, The Russian Intelligentsia. (Norman, Oklahoma, 1957), 58.

⁹⁰Marc, "Le Prolétariat." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933)., 567-569.

the proletarian condition. This was one area where the personalists were not prepared to allow each *patrie* to make its own laws.⁹¹ With a series of federal laws they would reduce the work-week, redistribute the wealth more equitably among society, assure that each person received enough money to live and that everyone was housed, encourage the participation of the proletariat in enterprise decision-making, and restore the proletariat's initiative and responsibility.⁹² In short they embraced socialist economics insofar as they mean:

The abolition of the proletarian condition; the supersession of the anarchic economy of profit by an economy directed to the fulfilment of the totality of personal needs; the socialization, without state monopoly, of those sectors of industry which otherwise foster economic chaos; the development of co-operative life; the rehabilitation of labour; the promotion, in rejection of all paternalist compromises, of the worker to full personality; the priority of labour over capital; the abolition of class distinctions founded upon the division of labour or of wealth; the priority of personal responsibility over the anonymous organization.⁹³

Just as they intended to subsume politics to the spiritual principle, the personalists placed the person and the spiritual concept of work over the materialist mechanism of economics. In this they followed Berdyaev's philosophy of labour. Berdyaev advocated a complete reappraisal of the spirituality of work. He decried capitalist exploitation, shunned the compulsory and dehumanizing tenets of communism, and saw in socialism only a partial improvement insofar as it ameliorated the conditions of workers, but socialism did not consider the spiritual aspect of labour and continued to regard it as worthless.⁹⁴ Berdyaev believed that "in its origin and meaning, labour is sacred and has a religious foundation".

⁹¹Marc & Dupuis, "Le Fédéralisme révolutionnaire." *Esprit*. (Nov. 1932), 321.

⁹²Marc, "Le Prolétariat." *Esprit*. (Jan. 1933), 560-563.

⁹³Mounier, Personalism, 104.

⁹⁴DM., 213.

Economic life depends on work, which itself depends on spirit and is a spiritual activity energizing in a physical environment; the same can be said of manual work...The yoke of work is the personal destiny of man, and as such it must be borne religiously; considered internally, work is an eternal ascetical element in life.⁹⁵

Instead of attempting to "free men from the burden of work", Berdyaev advocated the sanctification of work. He foresaw a more austere, monastic world where work would be understood as "a participation in creation, and great occupational activity combined with a cutting-down of 'wants'".⁹⁶ He did not see an ultimate solution to the problem of labour during man's time on earth: the economic needs of society would always, to some degree, conflict with the desires of the individual. But instead of the divisions between the "haves" and the "have nots", and the subjugation of manual workers to the chimera of the dollar, he envisioned a "hierarchic whole" in which all forms of work and creativity were distributed.⁹⁷

In order to be able to go on living it is possible that the bankrupt peoples will have to enter on a new path of self-denial, by curbing their covetousness and putting a check on the indefinite expansion of their wants, and by having smaller families. This would be a new asceticism and the negation of industrial-capitalist principles.⁹⁸

Berdyaev advocated a revival of the rural economy, a return to trades and a co-operative approach to work and industry; competition would be replaced by cooperation; the town and city would again trade fairly and equally.

Thus, the personalists believed that the majority of problems in industry, including

⁹⁵C&C., 55,56.

⁹⁶NMA., 116.

⁹⁷DM., 216.

⁹⁸NMA., 94.

the proletariat, had been caused by a misinterpretation of the meaning of work. Instead of regarding labour as a dirty, ignominious task, as both the capitalists and socialists did, the personalists encouraged the development of the worker-creator.⁹⁹ To facilitate this they advocated the replacement of humans by machines whenever possible to relieve the drudgery of manual labour; work which required the human touch should be considered creative and the people involved in such labour should be encouraged to spiritualize and experiment with their creation; retraining programs could be established to allow people to vary their work.¹⁰⁰ The *patrie* system was designed to encourage more communication at work and therefore more spiritual development and satisfaction with the labour process.

The use of the term "New Middle Ages" led some to accuse personalism of being a hopelessly reactionary ideology which was trying to turn back the clock and actually reinstate the Middle Ages.¹⁰¹ It is true that the majority of personalists felt a sympathy for the land and to farm communes; most abhorred the physical manifestations of industry;

⁹⁹Dandieu, "De la Religion du travailleur." *Esprit* special edition, "Le travail contre l'homme." (Aug., 1933)., 572-584.

¹⁰⁰Dandieu, "De la Religion du travailleur." *Esprit* special edition, "Le travail contre l'homme." (Aug., 1933)., 580-584.

¹⁰¹Esprit advocated the philosophy outlined in Nikolai Berdyaev's A New Middle Ages. The tenets of this philosophy have often been misinterpreted; Berdyaev responded to one critic:

"I ought to say a word or two about Hecker's false interpretation of my own views. The terminology which I use, the words 'aristocratic principle', 'the new Middle Ages', etc., clearly lead him astray. He regards me as a supporter of feudal aristocracy, which is almost laughable. When I say that the world is moving towards a new Middle Ages, I certainly do not mean a return to the old Middle Ages and least of all to feudalism. the phrase is only an indication of the type of society in which man will strive after wholeness and unity as opposed to the individualism of modern history, and in which the significance of the religious principle will increase even though it may be in the form of militant anti-religion." [ORC., 179.]

Marc even called for the reestablishment of a "rapport entre l'homme et la terre".¹⁰² However, they realized that industry had improved the quality of life for human beings and, like the Social Revolutionaries in Russia, were more than prepared to allow the continuation of private corporations.¹⁰³ By not legislating the size or location of *patries*, they accepted modern social organization; they did not intend to make a mystique of "lost little communities", of "nearness" or "smallness".¹⁰⁴ Their doctrine merely asserted that if man was reunited with the spiritual, then modern alienation would be overcome and natural communities, in the factory, farm, or city, would emerge.

It goes without saying that although the personalists advocated a communal system, they were not communists. Essentially they asserted Berdyaev's theory of communism to explain this decision; they agreed with his differentiation between communality and communism. Personalists felt that communism had subsumed the *person* to the interests of a disembodied, mechanistic state. They abhorred the brutality and destruction of the person which they witnessed in the Soviet Union. Most of all, they despised communism's intrinsic materialist atheism: without the spiritual element, the personalists felt humanity was doomed.

The French personalist doctrine began with the philosophy expounded in Berdyaev's works. It subjected politics and economics to spirituality and transferred power from institutions,

¹⁰²Marc, "Le Prolétariat." *Esprit*. (Jan, 1933), 567.

¹⁰³Marc, "Le Christianisme et la Révolution spirituelle." *Esprit*. (Mar. 1933), 971. The SRs did not intend to immediately socialize industry. They would allow industry to develop along its present lines - with the amelioration of working conditions - until it reached an adequate level of production to justify its socialization. [Radkey, The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism, 72, 73.

¹⁰⁴Mounier, Personalism, 25.

ideas, and society to the person. Inspired by the Russian organic community, the *mir* and the *artel*', the personalists advocated communality, the redistribution of profit and obligations, and the decentralization of law and state. Their conception of a autonomous spiritual *patrie* was a direct expression of *sobornost*', and their world-plan for a federation of *patries* mirrored the Russian populist vision. Berdyaev's philosophy and Marc's ideology gave French personalism a distinctly Russian character.

Conclusion.

During the *entre-deux-guerres* years, France sought a new ideology which would alleviate the problems caused by industrialization and prevent another devastating world war. The Russian Revolution had challenged the legitimacy of capitalism, marxist ideology had undermined the liberal democracies, and the first major reaction to communism - fascism - had toppled the governments of Italy, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Spain. French intellectuals viewed the rapid change of Europe with apprehension and struggled with the problem of finding the correct path for France; their only agreement was that the current order could no longer stand. However, Catholic intellectuals found little appeal in the atheist aspirations of communism, and they often shunned the paganist, dictatorial directions taken in Germany and Italy. Desiring an alternative - a "third way" - they searched for any ideology which would provide communality and proclaim the primacy of the spiritual. Into this milieu arrived Berdyaev, Marc, and some two-hundred thousand Russian emigres fleeing the Bolshevik regime or cast out as "dangerous elements". They brought a uniquely Russian ideology: populism.

Although the Russian Populists were predominantly concerned with social, and not religious ideas, there existed a mentality in nineteenth and early twentieth century Russia which is most accurately labelled *populist*. Helen Iswolsky described it thus:

A familiarity with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and, of course, Soloviev, is as important to the understanding of my people's mystical soul as is the official teaching of the Orthodox hierarchy. The Russian social movement is altogether inspired by the ideals of Christian humanism...The genuine social aspirations of the Russians is expressed not in Marxism but in *populism*. *Populism* was both a social and a religious movement. It

claimed that the Christian ideals of truth and justice are innate in the Russian people.¹

Russian *populism* was founded upon the two beliefs of *sobornost'* and *Godmanhood*. *Sobornost'* is the social dimension as manifested in the Russian *mir*; it defined a society which enshrined the rights and uniqueness of each person, and yet subsumed that person within an organic community which possessed a personality of its own.

Russia's unique historical development resulted in the continuance of close-knit, natural communities long after Europe had moved on to feudalism and then atomized capitalism. *Sobornost'*, so dramatically idealized by the Slavophiles and their followers, had its roots in the ancient proverbs and attitudes of the *narod*; seen as a true "personality of persons", the *mir* strove to maintain its strength, cast out its weak elements, succour its "children", and encourage fertility and growth. It appealed to the disillusioned Russian intelligentsia as a society free from isolation and a disinterested, bloated bureaucracy; it provided a model for change for the French personalist intellectuals. A homogeneous community which promoted communication and decided its own customs and laws seemed a reasonable alternative to a centralized parliament which produced few solutions and spent its time, and people's money, in senseless bickering. Alexandre Marc acknowledges *sobornost'* as the inspiration for his ideology, and advocated *mir* as a model for Europe's communal organization²; Mounier celebrated community as a

¹Iswolsky, 156.

²See, Chapter 4., page 121.

"Russian" trait.³ *Sobornost* was the first Russian contribution to French personalism.

The second element of Russian populism was *Godmanhood*. As a philosophical idea, it was first developed in Kireevsky's blueprint for the "integral personality." Dostoevsky, in his tortured novels, uncovered the ultimate reality of the God-man as a product of humanity's uncontrollable freedom. Soloviev elevated *Godmanhood* to its apogee transcending the differences between the Catholic and Orthodox religions. Berdyaev combined *Godmanhood* with his own idea of "creativity", to forecast the role of humanity in the "New Middle Ages": people would no longer be subject to the whims of careless gods of their own making, be they divine or material; state, industry, race or the church would no longer command blind allegiance or lead astray through lies and neglect. Human beings would freely accept their spiritual nature and responsibility to humanity, and become the creative God-man.

The idea of *Godmanhood* is not new: its principles were elucidated in the New Testament parables of Jesus Christ, but Christians shunned that message. Perhaps, as Mounier suggested, they were not yet ready to accept it. The Russian philosophers grasped *Godmanhood*, but were themselves shunned by their peers. The French personalists, searching for a "third", spiritual way, also seized upon this idea as the very centre of their philosophy. French personalism advocated that *personnes* would develop, through the realization of vocation, incarnation and communion, their full and godlike potential. The *personnes* would then spontaneously form true communities, the *mirs* or *patries* which would become the new centres of government in Europe. Thus, through

³Mounier, Personalism, 69.

sobornost and *Godmanhood*, Russian populism provided the "third way" of personalism for *entre-deux-guerres* France.

The problem with ideas is that they are only cherished by those who comprehend them. Christ passed his message on most concretely to his apostles; the Russian populists found themselves despised by the *narod* which they idealized, and like *Vekhi*, Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and Bakunin appealed only to a small elite. In the same way, the French personalists created their "knight-monks" in the sure knowledge that only an elite could convince people to develop in the "proper" direction. Truly mingling the idea of "the good of the *mir*" with *Godmanhood*, these ideologies remained elitist, potentially despotic, and ultimately irrelevant to the people they intended to help.⁴

Nevertheless, the study of ideas suggests that although Russian populism and French personalism did not consummate a personalist revolution in 1930s France, they left a legacy which appears in all subsequent humanist, religious ideologies. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the influence of the ideas of *sobornost* and *Godmanhood* on the "flower children", Vatican II, the European federation, New Age religion, and the New World Order. But it is unquestionable that the French personalists of the 1930s found in Russian populism a model on which to base a new France.

⁴"The only drawback [to the *Esprit* movement] was that it, like so many similar movements was confined to a comparatively small group, unable to do anything which could effectively influence its environment. It could only 'endure' and try to understand the modern world, in which everything seemed to move in a direct contradiction to the aims of *Esprit*." [D&R., 275.]

"It is to be regretted that the *Esprit* movement never went beyond a small elite...It was mostly supported by University men, schooled in fixed frames of thought...there was no common language between the French elite and the masses." [Iswolsky, 115.]

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Note: This bibliography is divided into two sections: primary and secondary sources. Where possible, I have tried to allow the thinkers discussed in this thesis to speak for themselves. Thus the primary sources are their actual writings, or translations of their writings. The secondary sources provided the historical context, biographical information, and certain novel approaches to the history of French personalism. In particular, Chritain Roy's Alexandre Marc and the Personalism of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, 1920-1940 was extremely valuable for the development of this thesis.

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