

Emmanuel Mounier's Singular and Relational Person:  
A Communitarian Personalist Understanding of Personhood

Luke Joseph Guimond Mészáros Gilmore

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School of Political Studies Faculty of Social Sciences University of Ottawa

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## Abstract

This project focusses on the idea of how the person as developed by Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) is a departure from a common understanding of the person. Mounier's concept of the person is simultaneously singular and relational. Furthermore, the person is a spiritual being who represents the highest form of humanity that one can become. The idea of the person contains liberal and communitarian elements: the person understands herself as a unique subject whilst ontologically requiring the other to fully flourish as a person. It is incoherent for the person to conceive of herself as fundamentally separate of the other, which is why the person joins with the other to form a *nous*. This draws a stark line between Mounier and liberal individualist thought that conceives of the person as an isolated subject. The liberal element of Mounier's thought is that the state protects the person and her communities against actions that impinge upon the person's fundamental rights so that the person can maximise her freedom to flourish. Moreover, the institutions that form the personalist state are inspired by liberal thought. This means that Mounier's project begins from a communitarian standpoint and finishes by offering a *liberal* communitarianism.

Ce projet se concentre sur l'idée de la personne qu'a développée Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) et comment elle dévie d'une compréhension courante de la personne. Le concept de la personne de Mounier est simultanément singulier et relationnel. De plus, la personne est un être spirituel qui représente la plus haute forme de l'humanité que l'on pourrait devenir. Cette idée de la personne comprend des éléments libéraux et communautaires : la personne se perçoit comme un sujet unique alors qu'elle requiert ontologiquement autrui, afin de s'épanouir en tant que personne. Il est incohérent que la personne se conçoive comme être fondamentalement séparé d'autrui, ce qui est pourquoi la personne se joint à autrui pour qu'ils forment un *nous*. Cela établit une distinction nette entre Mounier et la pensée individualiste libérale qui conçoit de la personne comme un sujet isolé. L'élément libéral de la pensée de Mounier est que l'État protège la personne et ses communautés contre des infractions contre ses droits fondamentaux, afin que la personne puisse maximiser sa liberté de s'épanouir. En outre, les institutions qui forment l'État personnaliste s'inspirent de la pensée libérale. Cela veut dire que le projet de Mounier commence d'une perspective communautaire et se termine en proposant un communautarisme *libéral*.

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*For Mum, Dad, and Sabrina*

## Introduction

« La personne n'est pas le plus merveilleux objet du monde,  
un objet que nous connaîtrions du dehors, comme les autres.  
Elle est la seule réalité que nous connaissions et que nous fassions  
en même temps du dedans. Présente partout, elle n'est donnée nulle part. »<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In his address to the Association des amis d'Emmanuel Mounier to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of *Esprit*, Paul Ricœur declared, “meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne.”<sup>2</sup> This bold statement is, in part, a motivating factor for this thesis. Ricœur is pointing to the fact that “le personnalisme n'était pas assez compétitif pour gagner la bataille du concept.”<sup>3</sup> Personalism, therefore, “lost” the philosophical—even cultural—war. It was too attached to its religious roots—even if Emmanuel Mounier denied personalism's embeddedness in Catholic philosophy. This attachment did not help personalism's cause, as cultural changes have resulted in a heavy secularisation of society. Indeed, personalism's Christian roots have stunted its success amongst the people whom Mounier wished to attain: non-believers. And so, Ricœur sought to salvage the heart of Mounier's project: the person. He wanted to keep the person, for “elle reste le meilleur candidat pour soutenir les combats juridiques, politiques, économiques et sociaux.”<sup>4</sup> The person in Mounier's thought is a complex being who requires further analysis. In our view, the person is a singular-relational being embedded in a communitarian *liberal* polity, known as the *cité personnaliste*.

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France—Quadrige, 2016), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne,” *Esprit* (1983), 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) began his philosophical pursuits during the interbellum period<sup>5</sup> in the final decades of the Third French Republic. The dominant forces of the day were consolidating around individualist and collectivist poles. For Mounier, this individualist-collectivist dichotomy left a significant lacuna: Mounier's understanding of the person cuts through the individualist-collectivist binary and offers a simultaneously singular and relational understanding of the self.

Mounier imagined this person in a polity, the  *cité personnaliste* , that, despite his numerous protestations against the liberal order that he referred to as the  *désordre établi* , contains liberal elements within the communitarian framework. This polity respects the person's singularity and relationality by protecting the person's communal instincts through the enactment of communal rights whilst simultaneously centring all activity—political, economic, cultural, and social—on the person. This polity also creates the framework for persons within their community to maximise their freedom. To claim that the  *cité personnaliste*  is—to a degree—liberal is a significant break from the orthodox reading of Mounier. But it is still consistent with how Mounier described personalism.

In  *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*  (1936 [1961]), Mounier employed the term  *personnaliste*  in a broad manner to describe “toute doctrine, toute civilisation affirmant le primat de la personne sur les nécessités matérielles et sur les appareils collectifs qui soutiennent son développement.”<sup>6</sup> This could refer to myriad philosophies, and Mounier was open to a pluralist approach to personalism. That is, he thought of personalism as a catch all with many different shades so long as they all place the person

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<sup>5</sup> Interbellum refers to the period between the end of the First World War and the onset of the Second World War.

<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Mounier,  *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* , in  *Œuvres, tome i*  (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 483.

at the heart of their undertakings. Despite Mounier's own immoderate rejection of liberalism, we find that his polity is liberal to an extent.

Personalism is a philosophy that makes the person the centre of its philosophical undertakings. However, there are numerous obstacles to the reception of this philosophy today. First, its religious dimensions often fall on deaf ears in our secular age. Second, many of its core texts appear to address the issues of the day, and thus to have less bearing on our age.

The issues—political, economic, cultural, and social—that motivated Mounier's writings are particular to the interbellum and immediate postbellum periods.<sup>7</sup> As tempting as it is to draw similarities between contemporary events and those eighty years ago, the circumstances are different : “Aucun événement historique ne se reproduit sous la forme et dans les circonstances où il est advenu une première fois.”<sup>8</sup> However, we can learn valuable lessons from historical events that we can apply to our current era to avoid repeating certain trends. Mounier's work is valuable because it provides a strong insistence that the person is communitarian by nature, in contrast to the current era's excessively individualistic hegemonic ideology—neoliberalism. The political claims that Mounier made contain liberal elements that result in a form of perfectionist or communitarian liberal polity. This distinguishes Mounier's political claims not only from neoliberal ideology, but also from the dominant trends in non-perfectionist liberal theory today.

In this thesis, we will be placing emphasis on the liberal elements of Mounier's argument. This is not a position that is without difficulties, however, given the degree to

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<sup>7</sup> The postbellum period is that which followed the end of the Second World War. We consider postbellum to be from 1945 until 1950, when Mounier died.

<sup>8</sup> Michaël Fössel, *Récidive 1938* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2019), 11.

which Mounier denounced liberalism itself. One such difficulty with emphasising the liberal element of Mounier's thought is that Mounier was not the most nuanced writer. This means that individualism and liberalism are sometimes conflated in his thinking. This is understandable, given that much liberal thought promotes a view of the self as an individual capable of determining his own values and goals. But Mounier uses the term 'individualism' in a very precise manner to describe a number of pathologies of the modern world that are, we believe, separable from core liberal commitments. It is possible to separate individualism, as Mounier understood it, from liberalism to show how Mounier's arguments are liberal within the communitarian framework of personalist thought. Individualism, according to Mounier, is the philosophy that centres the individual on himself, builds walls to isolate the individual, and puts the individual on the defensive when interacting with others.<sup>9</sup> Even Mounier describes liberalism as vitiated by an individualism that permits capitalist exploitation, he also recognizes its strengths: "Le libéralisme (théorique) tient sa force spirituelle d'une défense des valeurs personnelles de liberté et d'initiative et d'une juste critique des méfaits de l'étatisme."<sup>10</sup> In emphasizing Mounier's communitarianism, it is important not to lose sight of his attachment to these liberal arguments. Like a great deal of liberal theory, Mounier places great weight on the fundamental equality and dignity of persons and their capacity to choose their own values and ends. Mounier appeals to the Kantian formulation on the dignity of the person on many occasions in his works.

In Mounier's work, however, this principle tends in a much more perfectionist direction than it does in most neo-Kantian political theory. Consider the principle of

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<sup>9</sup> Mounier, *Le personalisme*, 38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 604.

neutrality. A fundamental principle for the liberal state is that the legal arbitration that it does is done in a neutral, objective manner that treats each citizen equally according to their status as citizens. This objective neutrality of the liberal state does not consider the citizen's circumstance when administering justice, establishing educational policy, allocating offices, etc. While Mounier certainly agreed with the principle of fundamental equality, he was sceptical about the ideal of neutrality.<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that Mounier did not want the state to act as an impartial arbitrator to resolve disputes about the infringement of rights between persons. Rather, the arbitrating role of the state in the personalist state was to follow principles of personalism, which consider the whole person, including her circumstance. The state must serve to protect the fundamental interests of persons and communities (particularly minority communities), but it is not 'neutral' in its outlook:<sup>12</sup> personalism is a comprehensive doctrine.

In spite of this, we insist that Mounier's doctrine has a highly liberal tenor: he places enormous weight on personal freedom, something he thought was actually undermined in the so-called liberal order in which economic forces subject persons to impersonal domination.<sup>13</sup> The liberalism found in Mounier's works is quite different from the neoliberalism dominant in our current era. Mounier critiqued the bourgeois order of his day for its individualism, yet in today's neoliberalism that individualist impulses to the extreme. By 'neoliberalism,' we refer to a radically atomistic and individualistic outlook that goes well beyond the individualist tendencies of classical liberalism. The latter, as

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* An important example of rejecting neutrality in Mounier's work is his description of what constitutes personalist education. He was against an agnostic view of education that liberals advanced. This means that Mounier believed education to focus too much on cold, objective subjects. *Cf. Manifeste*, 550-56.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 497, 550, 587.

Michaël Føessel argues, “renvoie à la tradition ouverte par Locke et qui culminera avec Kant : celle qui repose sur la promotion de l’État de droit et la limitation de son action selon des principes juridiques intangibles.”<sup>14</sup> This liberalism changed the way that humans conceive of themselves as well as the ways that we govern ourselves, but in doing so, it began to tear away slowly at the social fabric and the pre-modern connectedness. The natural progression of this philosophical tradition has resulted in neoliberalism. Using Føessel’s definition, we can understand neoliberalism as a philosophy that “ne prône pas simplement l’indépendance du marché, mais l’extension du modèle économique à l’ensemble des sphères de l’interaction sociale. Trouvant son origine dans l’utilitarisme de Bentham, ... [l]e néolibéralisme ne désigne plus seulement une gouvernementalité fondée sur la liberté des individus, il est un ‘art de gouverner à la rationalité des gouvernés eux-mêmes.’”<sup>15</sup> While Mounier did not live in a neoliberal age, many of his criticisms of capitalist society attack the liberal individualism that has its most radical manifestation in neoliberal governmentality. Mounier’s conception of the person speaks to the origins of neoliberalism that Føessel describes: even though, as stated above, events never repeat themselves exactly, the forces that Mounier sought to counter—namely capitalism and individualism—are still present.<sup>16</sup> Neoliberalism, through its hegemonic position in our current era, has convinced many that they are atomised individuals whose primary purpose is to provide labour and economic profit; this has at once led to alienation from others and has absorbed individuals into a mass of interchangeable economic agents (humans have become *homo æconomicus*).

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<sup>14</sup> Michaël Føessel, “Néolibéralisme *versus* libéralisme,” *Esprit* (2008), 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> These forces are perhaps more virulent and accelerated today, as Hartmut Rosa suggests, but that is beyond the scope of this project.

Mounier's work is significant to contemporary times because he conceives of the person as an entity that remains singular yet is foundationally relational. Mounier argued that the person is relational and her experience of the world as an independent being is revealed to her via the other.<sup>17</sup>

Mounier was, as we shall see, critical of parliamentary democracy for a number of reasons. For example, he thought that parliamentary democracy, especially the form it took in the Third French Republic, was not representative of what people wanted because the franchise was too limited and parties and special interests had too much control over politics,<sup>18</sup> but when he described his political ideal, he also sought to institute a parliamentary body that citizens elect.<sup>19</sup> He wanted citizens to be involved in the decision-making process in a more active way than French citizens were in the 1930s. He wanted citizens to hold the government to account via referenda.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see below, the political idea that Mounier laid out in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* is a form of modified liberal parliamentarianism.<sup>21</sup> Despite this unequivocal endorsement of a key liberal concept, the scholarship has tended to label Mounier as a socialist and to downplay these liberal elements.<sup>22</sup> But Mounier is far more liberal than he admitted or than others believe. Indeed, he simply desired a more corporatist version of democracy. This

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<sup>17</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 40.

<sup>18</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 619-20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 625.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 625-26.

<sup>22</sup> Gérard-Henry Baudry, *Socialisme et humanisme : Emmanuel Mounier, Teilhard de Chardin* (Lille, 1978), 79; Michel Barlow, *Le socialisme d'Emmanuel Mounier* (Toulouse: Primat, 1971), 128; Jean-Marie Domenach, *Emmanuel Mounier* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1972 [2014]), 115; and Johan De Tavernier, "The Historical Roots of Personalism: From Renouvier's *Le personnalisme*, Mounier's *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* and Maritain's *Humanisme intégral* to Janssens' *Personne et Société*," *Ethical Perspectives* 16, no. 3 (2009), 373.

democracy is not individualist; rather it based in communitarian arguments, but personal liberty remains at the heart of his ideal.

What we mean by liberalism is that personal freedom is protected from the state and from local communities, citizens have a say in who governs them via elections, and that the state arbitrates disputes between persons and communities. This is a perfectionist liberalism that has communitarian roots, not individualist ones. This means that it is not only a goal of personalist liberalism to maximise the freedom of persons to flourish but also to maximise the freedom of communities to flourish. This is important for our investigation into the nature of the person and how it relates to the concept of the *nous*. This forms the core of our contribution to the discussion surrounding the person in Mounier's works.

Most scholarship on Mounier correctly indicates that the person is a singular-relational being. We propose that the *nous* concept represents a person's communitarian nature. Jean-François Petit, for example, discusses the importance of the other to the person at length,<sup>23</sup> but he avoids linking this relationship that the person has with others to the concept of *nous*. The *nous* is a communal existence that is in tension with some liberal modes of conceiving of the person. If we define the liberal polity as the treatment of selves as nothing more than atomistic, self-interested individuals who keep others at a distance and tend to treat others as objects and means to achieve their goals, then the person, according to Mounier, cannot exist in any liberal polity. However, if we define a liberal polity as one in which the state arbitrates between persons and communities, creates a framework for persons and communities to flourish, and has a form of parliamentary

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-François Petit, *La personne au secours de l'humain : 30 études personalistes* (Paris: Paroles et Silence, 2018), 66-70.

democracy, we can argue that the concept of the *nous*, which is so important to the person, is not an impediment to a liberal polity.

This project seeks to understand two things: the integral relationship between the person and the *nous*, and the extent to which Mounier's political claims contain elements of liberal theory. As a result, the main research question is the following: given that the person portrayed in the writings of Emmanuel Mounier has a communitarian essence, how can we understand the person's flourishing in a quasi-liberal state? This project will argue that Mounier's *cit e personnaliste* reconciles liberalism and communitarianism in a distinctive synthesis. Like many of Mounier's interpreters, we will place emphasis on the manner in which his vision of human relations combats radical individualism, but we will equally point out the way in which Mounier's ideal places emphasis on the protection of persons and their singular freedom. In particular, this thesis will analyse the plural subject that Mounier called the *nous*, and how it is foundational to the person and to the *cit e personnaliste*.

The project begins with an analysis of the definition of the person found in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* in order to answer this question. It is critical to begin with the definition and comprehend what the person is. This examination will allow us to consider the *nous* concept and its relationship to the person. The *nous* represents a 'person of persons,' as Mounier put it. When a person embraces the *nous* and thus transcends herself, she can fully flourish because she is opening herself up to a genuine encounter with the other. This encounter enables the person to fully realise herself. Mounier is relying on the Catholic view of persons as beings-in-relation: we do not travel through life alone, but rather with others, in community. The person's embedding in a community

is central to Mounier's argument. This embedding is important for understanding Mounier's political claims.

Mounier was of the opinion that the most prevalent economic and political institutions of his time, namely capitalism and parliamentarianism, were fundamentally flawed due to the influence of radical individualism.<sup>24</sup> Mounier was likewise troubled by the proliferation of collectivist and totalitarian regimes. He opposed individualism and collectivism, instead advocating for a communitarian form of politics with liberal characteristics. Mounier desired the return of a common good rather than each individual pursuing her own good. In these claims, Mounier's argument can be placed alongside those made by other communitarian thinkers, such as Charles Taylor, who seek to modify rather than abolish dominant liberal norms.

## **Methodology**

This project seeks to comprehend the liberal elements in Mounier's political claims and to indicate how the person's communitarian nature fits with these liberal elements. Our hope is to bring Mounier's personalism and the person at its heart into the twenty-first century. In order to do so, this thesis will pursue an analytical reconstruction of Mounier's thought from his main published works. This necessitates a textualist approach to reading Mounier.

Reconstruction is perhaps the most appropriate method of interpretation for Mounier's œuvre. At the end of the introduction to *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme ?* (1947 [1962]), Mounier makes an interesting statement about how we should perceive

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Tirvaudey, *Introduction au personnalisme d'Emmanuel Mounier* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2021), 23-33.

personalism. He wrote that personalism “n’est pas un schéma intellectuel qui se transporte intact à travers l’histoire.”<sup>25</sup> The fact that personalism does not remain ‘intact’ as new generations consider it suggests that we are able to reconstruct passages to accord more with our own era. Further on, he continued his statement by saying that he had developed personalism to the extent of his abilities. He concluded the introduction by saying, “Nous assistons bien plutôt aux premières sinuosités d’une marche cyclique où des explorations poussées sur une voie jusqu’à épuisement ne sont abandonnées que pour être retrouvées plus tard et plus enrichies par cet oubli et par les découvertes dont il a libéré le chemin.”<sup>26</sup> This is quite interesting in light of Ricœur’s comment about personalism not being as competitive or popular as other philosophical currents.<sup>27</sup> We view this statement as Mounier opening the door for interpreters of his work to reconstruct his ideas: Mounier is inviting us to think through what he wrote and to give new meaning to certain ideas.

To undertake our project, we have primarily relied on the *Œuvres de Mounier* published by Éditions du Seuil. These *Œuvres* contain the bulk of Mounier’s published books as well as articles that were put together posthumously that provide the framework and arguments of what is known as Mounierian personalism. Given that the four tomes of the *Œuvres de Mounier* do not contain the entirety of his writings, we have also relied on articles that Mounier published via his revue *Esprit*. All of Mounier’s writings have been considered, as they all might contain passages relevant to our research. Even though each of Mounier’s publications might be beneficial to our project, we have focussed our efforts on the books that Mounier authored: *Révolution personaliste et communautaire* (1935

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<sup>25</sup> Mounier, *Qu’est-ce que le personalisme ?*, in *Œuvres*, tome iii (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 182.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ricœur, “Meurt,” 113.

[1961]), *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* (1936 [1961]), *Introduction aux existentialismes* (1946 [1962]), *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme ?* (1947 [1962]), and *Le personnalisme* (1949 [2016]). These are the writings in which Mounier delivered his most consistent and programmatic assertions about the person and about the political implications of personalism. In these works, Mounier outlined his objections to the prevailing individualist worldview as well as his rejection of the emerging collectivist regimes based on communist, fascist, and national socialist ideologies. In addition to this, he outlined, in broad strokes, the primary concerns that would play a part in the establishment of a personalist polity. We placed importance on other texts, such as *De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine* (1934 [1961]), *Les certitudes difficiles* (1951), and “Y a-t-il une justice politique ?” (1947), as Mounier focussed these texts on one or two issues less developed elsewhere in his works. For example, *De la propriété* expounds upon important economic themes of the  *cité personnaliste*  that receive some attention in other texts, like *Manifeste*, but not to the same extent.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, these other works provide depth and clarity to what Mounier wrote in the aforementioned books. Given our keen focus on these texts, we outline below the reasons for which we selected each text and how it relates to the coherence of our project.

Mounier’s first major text is *Révolution personnaliste et communautaire*. Surprisingly, Mounier did not provide a definition of the person in this work; however, he

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<sup>28</sup> These other texts, such as *Traité du caractère* (1946), are important and deserve to be examined in their own right. However, they do not address the topics of the *nous* and of the political reality of the  *cité personnaliste*  in the same manner as the publications we consider in our analysis. Although *Traité du caractère* does discuss the topic of the other and the person’s relation to others, the text has a different objective than the rest of Mounier’s works: this book attempts to fill a lacuna in psychological discourses that were occurring in France in the immediate postbellum era. This is not to say that a psychological approach to understanding the person in Mounierian thought is not useful; rather it is to say that it does not serve the objectives of the project at hand.

did discuss the topic of the *nous*. The *nous* is the desired relationship for the person, as it contains within it a *je* and a *tu* who are equal and independent subjects. This relationship is crucial for our analysis as well as for the answer to the motivating question.

It is in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* that we encounter the definition Mounier gave to his conception of the person. Mounier was somewhat reluctant to give a straightforward definition of the person. His reluctance stems from the influence of existentialist thinkers on his thought. In existentialist thought, there is a reluctance to define the *je* because it subsumes all experiences into one definition. It erases the experiences of each *je*, which is something that Mounier wanted to avoid. In this text, Mounier made clear his objection to providing a hard definition because he recognised that general definitions can erase particular experience, but he did define the person. He also provided an outline of what a personalist polity would entail. This is important because it contains the majority of what we regard to be the liberal features of Mounierian personalism. Mounier offered his most political description of what a personalist society might look like, and it is through reconstructing his arguments that we advance the claim that this polity has a liberal character to it.

What is interesting to note, for our purposes and in general, is that there is a shift in how Mounier approached his topic. In his interbellum writings, Mounier was preoccupied with the political events unfolding in Europe. Even though the concern for the political remains in the postbellum writings, Mounier devoted time to refining his writing in order to give greater depth and precision to his philosophical claims, especially about the interpersonal relationships and even what affects the person.

Indeed, the first text to provide some more depth is *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme?* In this book, Mounier sought to address the many changes that had occurred since the publication of his manifesto ten years prior. This book aligns personalism with Marxism on the need for revolution,<sup>29</sup> yet it criticises Marxism's attachment to materialism: Mounier wanted to surpass Marxism<sup>30</sup> and offer a form of quasi-socialist inspired communitarian thought not grounded in material claims. But he was not just critical of Marx. Mounier also critiqued the *désordre établi*, i.e., the individualist capitalist order. The critiques that Mounier levelled against bourgeois individualism and collectivism, be it Marxist or fascist, were present in his works from the beginning. At the onset of the Cold War between Western capitalist individualism and Soviet communist collectivism, Mounier continued to chart a philosophical third way in his first postbellum text. In this text, we also find the topic of the *nous*, and we see Mounier engage with contemporary philosophical currents, in particular thinkers such as Georges Bernanos and Gabriel Marcel. This interaction caused Mounier to wrestle more with his claims as he worked to refine them. We set out to attenuate some of the difficulties in Mounier's thought by providing an analytical elucidation of his claims about the *nous* and the other, and by showing the consistency across his œuvre.

We see this work of elaboration in Mounier's *Introduction aux existentialismes*. Here, Mounier explored the way in which the person related to the other. We learn more about the other and how the other helps the person to flourish. This text is useful for our reconstruction of Mounier because he is directly engaging with contemporary writers, which gives us insight into what he meant.

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<sup>29</sup> Mounier, *Qu'est-ce*, 181-82.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

The final main text that we consider is *Le personnalisme*. This is the last book that Mounier published. This text is useful for several reasons: first, we learn more about the person's relationship to the world. Second, we find an addendum to his definition of the person that helps us immensely reconstruct Mounier's meaning. Third, we find the most refined claims about the person and her nature. Finally, it is in this last book where we find another description of the political reality that Mounier sought to build. This description is much more surface level than the depiction of the political project in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*.

The concentration on these texts is also important for situating this project alongside the scholarship on Mounier. As we provide a textualist reconstruction, we have engaged a limited number of interlocutors. We engage other interpreters of Mounier's works. In fact, like this project, much of the scholarship focusses on these writings, for they constitute the core of Mounier's philosophy.

## **Literature Review**

The amount of works dedicated to examining the Emmanuel Mounier's œuvre has ebbed and flowed since his death in 1950. Much of the scholarship was published in the first thirty-years following Mounier's death. Mounier's influence has been felt notably in French-speaking countries as well as regions with sizeable Catholic populations, such as Spain, Italy, South America, and Eastern Europe. Mounier's works have known less influence in Anglosphere countries, likely because of his influence being limited to

Catholic circles on the Left.<sup>31</sup> However, things are changing. Over recent years, there has been a revival of interest in Mounierian thought. Juan Manuel Burgos notes, “personalism is in a period of expansion: publication by and about personalist philosophers are constantly appearing; the numbers of doctoral theses and conferences is increasing; its application to new areas, such as psychology and personalist bioethics, is being investigated; new institutions which are inspired by personalism or promote it are being founded, and so on.”<sup>32</sup> This revival will hopefully bring new analyses that challenge older interpretations.

We examined a wide spectrum of Mounier scholarship for our endeavour. We have separated our analysis of current research into two sections because we are interested in demonstrating how Mounier’s political statements have a liberal character to them as well as how the concept of the *nous* relates to what it means to be a person and to the politics of the *cit  personnaliste*. In the first section, we situate our work within the body of research on the theme of the person. We build upon the present scholarship and show how the person is more embedded in her relations with others than is sometimes suggested<sup>33</sup>—that is, for Mounier it is not simply that community is important for personal flourishing, but that personal identity is entirely dependent on and constituted by relationality. In the second section, we engage the scholarship that addresses Mounier’s political claims to demonstrate how they ignore Mounier’s inadvertent liberal assertions.

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<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Mounier and other personalist thinkers were influential at Vatican II. Saint Pope John Paul II was a noted personalist thinker prior to becoming pope. Even in Pope Francis’ works, we can find a personalist influence. Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2020), sec. 87, 88, 103, 105; Charles Taylor, “Freedom and Equality Aren’t Enough: A primer on ‘Fratelli Tutti,’” in *Commonweal*, November 2020, 18-21.

<sup>32</sup> Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, translated by RT Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Petit, 75.

*The Person and the Nous*

On the topic of the person, the scholarship is largely in agreement that the person is both singular and relational. She is embedded in particular circumstances and has important relationships with others that affect her being. Bernard Gendreau puts it perfectly when he writes, “There is ... in Mounier a sensitivity for the person as a unique center with its private value and its own meditative reflection even though the blossoming of the person is realized through reciprocity of consciousness and through participation with others.”<sup>34</sup> The person needs to belong to something outside of herself; she is a giving being who requires others so as to not be isolated. Throughout Mounier’s work, he is consistent about his view of the person belonging to an idea larger than herself. In *Révolution personaliste et communautaire*, Mounier stated explicitly that “nous sommes contre la philosophie du moi pour la philosophie du nous.”<sup>35</sup> Later, he described how the *nous* and the *je* are co-constitutive<sup>36</sup> and he carried this line of argument to his final work.<sup>37</sup> We take this to mean that the person cannot be without belonging to a *nous*.

Our contribution builds upon the works of others, such as Jean-François Petit. In his works, Petit identifies clearly the communitarian nature of the person. He writes, “Mounier ne pense pas la personne en dehors de l’intersubjectivité. Mais ce qu’il laisse impensé, c’est l’horizon métaphysique de cette intersubjectivité.”<sup>38</sup> Mounier was sparse on his elaboration of personalist metaphysics—for the person and for her intersubjectivity. In

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Gendreau, “The Role of Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier in the Creation of French Personalism,” in *The Personalist Forum* vol. 8, no. 1 (1992), 102.

<sup>35</sup> Mounier, *Révolution personaliste et communautaire*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 166.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>37</sup> Mounier, *Le personalisme*, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Petit, 74.

*La personne au secours de l'humain* (2018), Petit scratches at the surface of the importance of intersubjectivity in his analysis.<sup>39</sup>

Petit identifies three dimensions of the person. They are co-existence, intra-existence, and trans-existence. The second dimension, intra-existence, is about how the person recharges herself after interacting with others. Petit's presentation suggests that this dimension is a physical retreat from others. It is more of a temporal fact that the person recharges (collects her thoughts) when she is left alone or not interacting with others. The other two dimensions are more relevant to this thesis.

The co-existence dimension of the person is fundamental for understanding the person. Petit presents the dimension as the person's presence in the world. We build on this to show how the person is not only present in the world, but she also engages in a significant relationship with the other that is called the *nous*. To show this understanding of co-existence, we must ground ourselves in Mounier's argument about the *je* and *nous* being co-constitutive, as this implies that the *tu* is also co-constitutive of the *nous*.

The final dimension of trans-existence undergirds some of Mounier's metaphysical claims—the few that they may be. This dimension presents the person as an '*être-vers*,' meaning that the person is always moving toward becoming a fully realised person.<sup>40</sup> We differ slightly with Petit's presentation, for Petit focusses on how this affects the person's individual existence. In contrast, we demonstrate how the '*être-vers*' nature of the person is integral to her communal existence, as the person becomes herself in relation to others.

Mounier was not always the most unambiguous writer. He often provided little detail on central issues. One place, however, where he did give detail is the relationship

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>40</sup> This suggests a metaphysics of becoming that is similar to what one finds developed in queer theory.

with others and the concept of *nous*. The *nous*, in Mounier's work, is synonymous with community. Despite the lack of focus on the concept of *nous* in Boyer and other commentators, this does not mean that they are not attuned to the person's communal nature. Indeed, Boyer recognises the "caractère communautaire de toute vie"<sup>41</sup> and that the person's attraction to others represents "son plus sûr garant de force, de joie et de vie"<sup>42</sup> that the ultimate form of communal life, the *nous*, is not given a central position in their arguments. In Boyer, we find a rich analysis of the person's communicative side. He places emphasis on how the person is always attempting to communicate and to dialogue with others. Boyer writes that the person "est faite par la communication et qu'elle ne s'accomplit qu'en elle."<sup>43</sup> This suggests that the person is dialogical. This dialogical character points to the person's communitarian nature. We build upon Boyer's analysis by illustrating how the person is not only dialogical but is also embedded in intimate relationships with others that aid in the person's process of flourishing.

We broaden the definition of the person in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*. We argue that the person is defined not only as an independent existence but also as a part of the *nous*. These ontological claims about the person being primordially part of a communal entity have direct political implications. The *nous* described in Mounier's works is a person of persons, which is akin to a type of corporatist reality. But as we shall see, this communal, corporatist being exists in a polity partially shaped by liberal elements. As we said above, our assertion that Mounier's political reality has liberal characteristics is a heterodox view that deserves explaining in light of the orthodox view of Mounier.

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<sup>41</sup> Régis Boyer, *Actualité d'Emmanuel Mounier : La notion de personne* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1981), 101.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

*Mounier's Political Claims Are Not Just Socialist, They Are also Liberal*

While many scholars would agree with the emphasis we have thus placed on the person as a fundamentally communal being, our view of the political reality described by Mounier is a significant departure from orthodox interpretations of his thought. The orthodox view is that Mounier's political reality results in a form of socialism. For Gérard-Henry Baudry, it is quite clear: "Le personnalisme se situe sans conteste dans la tradition socialiste."<sup>44</sup> There is copious evidence for this perspective. It is easy to class Mounier as a socialist because how Mounier saw capitalism, as Baudry astutely remarks: "tout le mal est dû au capitalisme."<sup>45</sup> Mounier was unequivocal in his rejection of capitalism, but though he wanted to reign-in the power of capital, his ideal was quite distant from the heavily statist projects usually associated with socialism.

In *Le socialisme d'Emmanuel Mounier* (1971), Michel Barlow argues that Mounier's political claims result in an "état socialiste."<sup>46</sup> As evidence of Mounier's socialism, Barlow cites how Mounier wanted to reorient the economic life of humans away from a capitalist based modes of production to a 'renovated' form of socialism.<sup>47</sup> Barlow continues saying, "il est impossible de le considérer autrement que comme un 'homme de gauche,' mais il n'est pas si facile, pour autant, le situer sur l'échiquier politique."<sup>48</sup> We interpret this to mean that despite the appearance of Mounier's economic policies as wholly socialist in nature, the political ideals that coincide with the economic policies do not

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<sup>44</sup> Baudry, 79.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Barlow, 128.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

necessarily bind Mounier to heavily statist leftist movements. Barlow notes that in Mounier's work there is a desire to "limiter les pouvoirs de l'Etat non seulement par les responsabilités et les initiatives de la personne spirituelle, mais par tout un réseau de communautés gigognes imbriquées les unes dans les autres ou découpées dans le sens 'vertical.'"<sup>49</sup> What Barlow is describing is a core element of the liberal characteristics that we identify in Mounier's works. Although Barlow refrains from labelling it as such, this division-of-powers and federalist style of political organisation is quite liberal.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, this concern even impacts the way that some interpret Mounier within the bounds of socialist thought. Jacques Le Goff argues that Mounier cannot be called a social democrat because social democracy wants to merely alter the capitalist modes of economics when Mounier wants to do away with capitalism.<sup>51</sup> We understand the concern, but the passages where Mounier spoke directly to his view of democracy, such as in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, describe a (modified) form of a liberal institution: an elected-representative parliament. He believed that "le pouvoir parlementaire doit être limité"<sup>52</sup> more than being completely abolished. Mounier certainly belongs somewhere in the socialist tradition, but though one of his primary goals is to replace capitalism, and though he constantly denounced the ways in which parliamentary systems can be corrupted under capitalism,<sup>53</sup> his proposed reforms entail a number of liberal representative institutions and a series of institutional arrangements—balances of power, codified personal rights—that are fully in keeping with the liberal tradition.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>50</sup> It harkens back to even a Montesquieuan vision of politics.

<sup>51</sup> Jacques Le Goff, "Emmanuel Mounier et la social-démocratie," in *Esprit* (1978), 159.

<sup>52</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 626.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 625.

## Overview of our Project

In chapter one, we focus on the definition Mounier gives in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* for the concept of the person. This definition is peculiar. Mounier is very reluctant to define the person. To understand the reluctance, we consider the influence of phenomenological and existentialist thinkers. We present our argument that in addition to the definition in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, there is an addendum to it found in *Le personnalisme* that reinforces the importance of the *nous* to what the person is.

It is in the second chapter that we work through the ontological claims that Mounier makes. The most important concept to comprehend is the *nous*. Our analysis of this concept will lead us to examine personalist and non-personalist groupings, something that will be important for the analysis of Mounier's political claims in chapter three. We also consider how the person makes commitments and the difference between a personalist commitment and a commitment found in social contract theory.

In the third chapter, we analyse the political claims Mounier makes. We demonstrate how Mounier's arguments result in a form of liberal communitarianism with a corporatist character. We examine Mounier's conception of democracy, arguing that it is a hybrid of liberal and republican ideas. Armed with this knowledge, we can move to the conclusion and final commentary on the significance of the *nous* in Mounier's œuvre and how the person functions as a communitarian being inside a political system that exhibits liberal and communitarian features.

In the fourth and final chapter, we consider if our analyses have met our hypothesis. Following this, we explore some of the potential limitations of our analysis. This will allow

us to draw our final conclusions about the tension and the relevance of Mounier's work for the twenty-first century.

# I

## Singular *and* Relational: The Mounierian Conception of the Person

« *C'est la personne qui fait son destin :  
personne autre, ni homme, ni collectivité ne peut la remplacer.* »  
Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution personaliste et communautaire*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Each person is embedded in a particular circumstance that has an effect on her, but it is incumbent on each person to forge her own destiny and life. The way that each person is affected by her<sup>2</sup> circumstance is unique. Emmanuel Mounier took to heart the uniqueness of each person. Despite this uniqueness, however, Mounier believed that each person shares commonalities with others: everyone shares in each other's humanity. This shared humanity—the human condition<sup>3</sup>—binds persons together. But while Mounier makes universalist claims about the human condition, he argues that defining what it means to be a person remains a challenge. For Mounier, it is a challenge to consider a rigorous definition of the person because, in a quasi-existentialist manner, Mounier viewed personhood as something that one attains, in a constant unending fashion. Moreover, the process of becoming a person is linked to the unique characteristics of the circumstance in which individual human beings find themselves. As we shall see, it is better to *describe* the person than to define what the person is. Indeed, it is better to refer to what Mounier

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution personaliste et communautaire*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 176.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, we have elected to use the third person feminine for the person, as this is in keeping with the original text, written in French.

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France—Quadrige, 2016), 86.

offers as “a *description-definition*,”<sup>4</sup> (emphasis in original) a phrase we have borrowed from Spanish personalist thinker Juan Manuel Burgos.

The descriptive definition given in *Manifeste au service du personalisme* (1935 [1961]) gives the impression that the person is a singular being because of the insistence on the person having an independent existence.<sup>5</sup> In other passages of the text, Mounier expressed the importance of relationality for the person,<sup>6</sup> but he did not place relationality in the descriptive definition he gave of the person. In his final text, *Le personalisme* (1949 [2016]), Mounier addressed again the topic of what it means to be a person. He offered an elaboration that may be considered an addendum to the initial definition in *Manifeste*. Its appearance in Mounier’s final text could indicate Mounier’s own desire to reconstruct a central element of his philosophy. The addendum also provides more clarity to the person’s relationality and the formation of the *nous*. Without the addendum, it is difficult to fully comprehend the singular *and* relational nature of the Mounierian conception of the person.

This chapter presents the descriptive definition that Mounier gave to the person and lays the groundwork for the main arguments of this project. In doing so, this chapter will present the person as an independent existence embedded in particular worldly circumstances. Further, it will indicate that personhood is a particular mode of being—one becomes a person through one’s rich intersubjective relationships with others. We begin by considering the definition of the person in conjunction with the addendum. Following

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<sup>4</sup> Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, translated by RT Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 523. In the French definition, Mounier uses the term ‘subsistance.’ The English translation done by the Monks of St. John’s Abbey in 1938 translated ‘subsistance’ as ‘existence’ (1938: 68).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

this analysis, we can turn to the issue of the person-individual dialectic present in each human being.

### **Defining the Person**

When we begin to read Mounier's work, we expect to find a definition of the person. After all, the person is the central concept of Mounier's philosophy. However, Mounier is reluctant to provide a definition. In *Le personnalisme*, Mounier writes that "[o]n s'attendait à ce que le personnalisme commençât par définir la personne. Mais on ne définit que des objets extérieurs à l'homme, et que l'on peut placer sous le regard. Or, la personne n'est pas un objet."<sup>7</sup> This passage is important, as for Mounier, it is paramount to distinguish between subjects and objects. The former is exclusively a human being who has a superior normative status to the latter—in the category of object, we class all inanimate things and all living creatures that are not humans. This distinction is significant because in Mounierian thought, objects are easily definable, but subjects are known from the inside.<sup>8</sup> Each human, according to Mounier, experiences life and personhood in a unique way. For this reason, Mounier avoids making a strict definition, instead he offers more of a description of the person.

He defended this procedure by framing personhood as a revelatory process that one undertakes throughout one's life. Mounier writes,

La personne, en effet, étant la présence même de l'homme, sa caractéristique dernière, n'est pas susceptible de définition rigoureuse. Elle n'est pas non plus objet d'une expérience spirituelle pure, détachée de tout travail de la raison et de toute donnée sensible. Elle se révèle cependant à travers une expérience décisive, proposée à la liberté de chacun, non pas

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<sup>7</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

l'expérience immédiate d'une substance, mais l'expérience progressive d'une vie, la vie personnelle.<sup>9</sup>

For Mounier, the person is something that one becomes and that one discovers progressively through one's life. The continual revelation of each person's existence means that defining a changing being becomes a challenge. What Mounier is saying is that each one of us is unique and the creator of our own life by the choices that we make; therefore, even if we share some commonalities, our unique attributes overshadow the commonalities.

In *Manifeste*, after Mounier described the ills of bourgeois individualism, Marxism's 'new man,' and what fascism does to humankind, he turned to defining what the personalist option entailed. Mounier wrote,

*Une personne est un être spirituel constitué tel par une manière de subsistance et d'indépendance dans son être ; elle entretient cette subsistance par son adhésion à une hiérarchie de valeurs librement adoptées, assimilées et vécues par son engagement responsable et une constante conversion ; elle unifie ainsi toute son activité dans la liberté et développe par surcroît à coups d'actes créateurs la singularité de sa vocation.*<sup>10</sup> (emphasis in original)

This definition highlights the uniqueness and singularity of each person: the person is an independent existence. In his discussion of this definition, Jean-François Petit draws on remarks made by Paul Ricœur. Petit writes, "Emmanuel Mounier a toujours évité de commencer par des définitions abstraites : il a plutôt cherché à promouvoir des 'profils-limites' ou des 'directions d'expérience'."<sup>11</sup> The profils-limites and directions d'expériences to which Ricœur referred are found in Mounier's *Révolution personaliste*

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<sup>9</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 523-24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-François Petit, "Personne et communauté au cœur du nouveau statut de l'enseignement catholique," (Institut catholique de Paris, 2013), 4.

*et communautaire*. An example of the profils-limites, according to Ricœur, is the individual.<sup>12</sup> In Mounier's works, the individual (the symbol of the bourgeois order) is opposed to the person as a lower form of being that humans can become when they are alienated and isolated. And, by the reference to the profils-limites, Ricœur meant that the individual, like the person, represents one of many "ways of being."<sup>13</sup> Simply put, profils-limites means the representative figure of a way of being. This is related to the directions d'expériences. Ricœur refers to a passage where Mounier argued that one finds the person inside of oneself by not searching specifically for it.<sup>14</sup> The person finds herself inside of herself thanks to not only her own efforts but also to the efforts of others around her. The relevance of others in these efforts, however, is not made clear by the above definition. This is why we would like to suggest that what Mounier offered as the definition of the person is incomplete. This depiction gives the impression that the person is a sort of individual who operates alone, without the support or influence of others. The sum of Mounierian personalist thought reveals that this is not the case. To bring clarity to this definition and to properly analyse the Mounierian conception of the person, we need to also consider the complimentary passage from *Le personnalisme*.

Indeed, as Burgos points out, the person necessitates relationality.<sup>15</sup> The person needs structure, which her relationship to others provides. This is reflected in *Le personnalisme* when Mounier provided what we consider to be an addendum to his earlier

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Ricœur, *History and Truth*, translated by Charles A Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965 [2007]), 139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 182.

<sup>15</sup> Burgos, 73.

descriptive definition. Mounier makes clear that a singular, isolated existence is not a possibility because the person is relational and embedded in communities:

la personne nous apparaît comme une présence dirigée vers le monde et vers les autres, sans bornes, mêlées à eux en perspectives d'universalité. Les autres personnes ne la limitent pas, elles la font être et croître. Elle n'existe que vers autrui, elle ne se connaît que par autrui, elle ne se trouve qu'en autrui. L'expérience primitive de la personne est l'expérience de la seconde personne. Le *tu*, et en lui le *nous*, précède le *je*, ou au moins l'accompagne ... On pourrait presque dire que je n'existe que dans la mesure où j'existe pour autrui, et, à la limite : être, c'est aimer. [emphasis in original]<sup>16</sup>

This passage reveals an essential characteristic about the Mounierian conception of the person: the person has a singular notion of herself, but she is *foundationally* a relational being. Mounier is trying to have it both ways: he wants a singular being, but one who can only know herself via the other. It is through her relationship with others that the person is able to understand and discover herself. This is critical for how the person understands her identity. Identity (a stand-in for self-discovery) is thoroughly relational. This means that the person forms her identity through her relationships with others.

Mounier tried to forge a middle ground between individualism and collectivism and to reappropriate words, such as the person and community, to combat the forces of his era. This third way form of communitarian politics drew silent inspiration from Catholic social thought. How Mounier fashioned the person as singular *and* relational can lead one to think of how Pope Francis talks about personhood in our current era; one need only consider Francis' appeals in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* or even his 2015 Holy Trinity Sunday Angelus address. In this address, much like in the encyclical, the pope has said, "We are called to live not as one without the others, above or against the others, but one with the

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<sup>16</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 40.

others, for the others, and in the others.”<sup>17</sup> This is similar to how Mounier valued each person as part of something larger. The effect of Mounier’s argument is to resurrect an older, Christian sense of being that Mounier thought the bourgeois order had attempted to quash. This Christian understanding of being valorises the person’s singular *and* relational natures.

Before we can consider what the *nous* means, we need to deepen our understanding of how Mounier constructed the above description of the person. We can observe that the *description-definition* draws inspiration from a variety of different thinkers. Jean-François Petit breaks the definition into sections that point to the inspiration from different thinkers:

Cette définition de la personne est très riche. Elle fait coexister, remarque Paul Ricœur, une ontologie de la subsistance, une référence à un ordre hiérarchique de valeurs et un sens aigu de la singularité et de la créativité. On peut y reconnaître les trois lignes d’influence partiellement évoquées ci-dessous :

- La première est la ligne Aristote-Boèce-saint Thomas. On y retrouve le vocabulaire de la substance.
- La seconde est proche de l’échelle de valeurs matérielles, vitales, raisonnables et spirituelles défendues par Scheler et Landsberg. On y retrouve l’idée kantienne de la responsabilité.
- La dernière s’origine dans les recherches sur l’activité créatrice de Bergson et de son disciple Jacques Chevalier.<sup>18</sup>

Mounier reconciled these disparate influences by emphasising the freely creative nature of the person.<sup>19</sup> This helps to situate the definition of the person as having some affinities with existentialist philosophy, as existence is discovered and brought into relief via the relationships that the person enters with others. This quasi-existentialism comes, in part,

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<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, “Angelus” [Holy Trinity Sunday Address from Sunday, 31 May 2015], accessed on 12 June 2022, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_angelus\\_20150531.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2015/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20150531.html).

<sup>18</sup> Petit, *La personne*, 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

from the influence of Paul-Louis Landsberg and Max Scheler. Landsberg was a German philosopher who fled Nazi Germany to find refuge in France.<sup>20</sup> Landsberg was an existentialist thinker who introduced to Mounier the idea of *engagement*. This had a large impact on Mounier's thinking. For Landsberg, the person is defined by her *engagement* in the world, as it grounds us to a particular time and place in history.<sup>21</sup> Mounier's encounter with Landsberg gave him a vocabulary for concepts that one could already find in Mounier's early works. Part of Landsberg's influence was the result of his own education. Before fleeing Nazi Germany, Landsberg had studied with notable phenomenologist and existentialist thinkers, like Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. He also studied under Scheler, another influence on Mounier. Scheler was a phenomenologist and contributed to personalist philosophy in what Burgos calls the realist phenomenology current.<sup>22</sup> Scheler was also influential on Mounier's thinking about community and society.<sup>23</sup> Like Mounier, both Landsberg and Scheler have some Christian elements to their thought. Indeed, with this definition, we notice further evidence that Mounier was trying to reconstruct a Christian perception of the person.<sup>24</sup> This is a desire to reforge links between persons.<sup>25</sup>

Mounier insisted that the conception of the person was to be distinguished from the idea of 'the individual'—a catchall term for everything that Mounier did not like about the self in liberal thought. For Mounier, the individual is an amorphous being who represents the worst of humanity. According to Mounier, to be an individual is to lead an egotistical, isolated life, detached from others.<sup>26</sup> Mounier feared that this egotism was inside each

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, *Emmanuel Mounier* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972 [2014]), 102.

<sup>21</sup> Paul-Louis Landsberg, "Réflexions sur l'engagement personnel," *Esprit* (November 1937), 179-80.

<sup>22</sup> Burgos, 119, 120.

<sup>23</sup> It is from Scheler that Mounier was able to develop his idea of the *société vitale* (1961: 890).

<sup>24</sup> Terrence C Wright, "Emmanuel Mounier on the Person and Vocation," *Logos* 20, no. 1 (2017), 46.

<sup>25</sup> A similarity with Pope Francis.

<sup>26</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 39.

human being. In fact, he presented the person and the individual not as two conceptions of the self that belong to two different philosophical schools (personalism and liberalism). Instead, this dialectic “is not a question of two metaphysical principles of understanding the subject, but rather two *ways* of understanding [humankind]. In other words, it is an *ethical question*. The only [human] who exists, if he wants to live adequately, must abandon the attitude of the individual and transform himself into a person. [emphasis in original]”<sup>27</sup> Becoming a person is a choice that we must all make. It is a difficult choice that requires commitment to a particular way of being.

### **The Person-Individual Dialectic**

The person and the individual are in a constant struggle. Mounier is making an ethical judgement: the individual is humankind’s lowest form whereas the person is humankind’s highest form. Each human being can be one or the other, and the institutions of the polity endorse particular ways of being. The polity via its institutions shapes whether a human being will be an individual or a person.<sup>28</sup>

Mounier’s negativity toward the individual and individualism is interesting. As Burgos comments, “individualism ... ha[s] a positive aspect, Kierkegaardian and personalist in tone: it defend[s] the primacy of the subject over the society.”<sup>29</sup> While in both individualism and personalism, selves are more important than institutions, Mounier rejects the individual as “vidé de toutes substances et attaches charnelles ou spirituelles, fortifié de ressentiments et de revendications, érigé en absolu.”<sup>30</sup> Mounier also associated

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<sup>27</sup> Burgos, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Mounier, *Le personalisme*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Burgos, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 296.

the notion of the 'individual' with comfort. For Mounier, this means that the individual is more concerned with 'having' than 'being.' Comfort is the ultimate value for the bourgeois individual.<sup>31</sup> This 'having' results in a materialism that isolates the individual from others and from what it means to 'be.' Mounier attacked the materialist impulse at the heart of the individual. This does not mean that humans should not be taken care of materially; rather it means that humans should have that which they need and not superfluous things.<sup>32</sup> Mounier associated excessive materialism with the individual who cares more for his possessions and how he is perceived than about others.

The individual's egotism has eroded the links between the subject and the whole, i.e., the community. This process created a void in the individual, which Mounier argued has been filled by material objects and a complete value system to support this hollow existence.<sup>33</sup> The figure that arises from this mindset is an artificial human, 'the individual.' For Mounier, this being is a means instead of an end:

Homme artificiel, l'homme de l'individualisme, support sans contenu d'une liberté sans orientation. Homme artificiel, le citoyen sans pouvoir qui élit à côté des pouvoirs les hommes qui vendront le pouvoir. Homme artificiel l'individu économique du capitalisme, main et mâchoire, comme dans Picasso. Homme artificiel, l'homme d'une classe, c'est-à-dire d'un ensemble d'habitudes, de convenances et d'expressions soudées par l'ignorance et le mépris.<sup>34</sup>

His indictment was severe, as it sought to illustrate the flawed nature of bourgeois society.

The picture of the artificial human as a member of a class is reminiscent of the 'señorito satisfecho' (the satisfied young master) in Spanish thinker José Ortega y Gasset's *Revolt*

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<sup>31</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 493.

<sup>32</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 274; Emmanuel Mounier, *De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 444-45, 461.

<sup>33</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 38-39.

<sup>34</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 163.

of the Masses (1932 [1993]): “He is a man who has entered upon life to do ‘what he jolly well likes.’”<sup>35</sup> Both of these images depict the individual as self-centred and isolated figure.<sup>36</sup>

The individual’s artificial nature is representative of his class and his possession of things.<sup>37</sup> The artificial individual is not an independent being; rather he is malleable according to the whims of the class and the forces that control him. Mounier juxtaposed this nature with that of the person. Compared to the individual’s artificial nature, Mounier presented the person as concrete: “l’homme concret, c’est l’homme qui se donne. Et comme il n’est de générosité qu’en l’esprit par la voie du monde et des hommes, l’homme concret, c’est l’homme contemplatif et travailleur.”<sup>38</sup> According to Mounier, concrete refers to the nature of the person as someone who labours and experiences the struggles of the world. This distinguishes the person from the individual, whom we likened to Ortega y Gasset’s ‘señorito satisfecho,’ as Mounier associated the individual and individualism with the bourgeois capitalist class. By abstraction, we can say that Mounier associated the person with those who laboured for their wage. Without injecting ourselves into a lengthy discussion of class conflict, the point that Mounier was making was that the individual is the paragon of the bourgeois *désordre établi*, meaning that Mounier associated everything negative about the bourgeois world with the figure of the individual (rightly or wrongly).<sup>39</sup> Part of this is describing the individual as artificial and out of touch with daily, concrete

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<sup>35</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses* (New York: WW Norton and Company, Inc., 1964 [1993]), 102.

<sup>36</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 163.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Burgos, 11.

reality. As a result, Mounier associated concreteness with persons and the tangible daily lives that they lead; the ordinary is fundamental for the person.<sup>40</sup>

Another important distinction that Mounier drew between the individual and the person is their relationships to their circumstances. The individual is “[u]n homme abstrait, sans attaches ni communautés naturelles, dieu souverain au cœur d’une liberté sans direction ni mesure, tournant d’abord vers autrui la méfiance, le calcul et la revendication.”<sup>41</sup> Importantly, the abstract and artificial individual is not tied to its circumstance; the person is the opposite. Mounier grounded the person in her circumstance: “Mes humeurs et mes idées sont façonnées par le climat, la géographie, ma situation de la terre, mes hérédités et au-delà peut-être par la coulée massive des rayons cosmiques.”<sup>42</sup> We find consonance between Mounier’s focus on circumstance and Ortega y Gasset who wrote, “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia” (I am myself and my circumstance)<sup>43</sup> This means that the person has attachment to somewhere as much as to someone. This attachment to a person’s circumstance can be onerous to the point that the person may wish to detach herself from her circumstance and become an individual.

It is up to the human being to fight against the temptation to be an individual. It is not easy to be a person; it requires effort to maintain the person’s intersubjective relationships. There is always a risk that the person will be alienated and drift into becoming an individual.<sup>44</sup> But it is a rewarding struggle, for the person “est riche enfin de toutes les communions, avec la chair du monde et de l’homme, avec le spirituel qui l’anime,

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<sup>40</sup> Domenach, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>43</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote* (Mansfield Center: Martins Publications, 2012), 35.

<sup>44</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 40, 43-44.

avec les communautés qui la révèlent.”<sup>45</sup> This provides us with a clear hierarchy between the person and the individual. Despite the clear hierarchy between the person and the individual, Mounier remained ambiguous about precisely which individualist theories he so despised. Before we move onto the next chapter, we consider the idea of the individual that would most closely resemble the one critiqued by Mounier.

### *The Individual in Mounier's Crosshairs*

A significant challenge with Mounier's work is that he was ambiguous about the thinkers whom he targeted with his criticisms of the bourgeois *désordre établi*. Despite this ambiguity, it is clear that Mounier disliked the idea of the self that the bourgeois order propagated, that is, the individual. We have begun to sketch the reasons for this dislike above. What is lacking from our discussion has been an example of the thinker whose idea of the individual that Mounier had in his crosshairs. Mounier never explicitly stated the liberal thinkers with whom he took issue, but it is fairly evident that he took issue with the individualist premises behind much of the social-contract tradition. A defining feature of social contract theory from Hobbes, through Locke, Rousseau, and Kant all the way to mid-twentieth century neo-Kantian theories such as that of Rawls, is the attempt to come up with a model of how radically separate individuals can live together. The starting point of all such methodologically-individualist theorising—thinking the self as first and foremost an abstract individual, and only subsequently a social being—is precisely what Mounier was challenging. Even a figure like Kant, with whose notion of the absolute dignity of the person Mounier was extremely sympathetic, nonetheless conceives of this personhood in

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<sup>45</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 177.

a primarily individualist manner. The brilliant Rawlsian thought experiment of the veil of ignorance is another example of this methodological individualism.<sup>46</sup> When communitarian critics of Rawls, such as Michael Sandel, charge that the conception of the self that Rawls employed in *A Theory of Justice* is thin and emptied of all the particular, constitutive attachments that make up actual human personhood, they are making a claim that has strong Mounierian overtones. Sandel makes clear that the self that we find in Rawls's work is thin. According to Sandel, Rawls believes that "a person's values and ends are always attributes and never constituents of the self, so a sense of community is only an attribute and never constituent of a well-ordered society. As the self is prior to the aims it affirms, so a well-ordered society, defined by justice, is prior to the aims – communitarian or otherwise – its members may profess."<sup>47</sup> Sandel can make this charge because Rawls writes clearly that "free persons ... do not think of themselves as inevitably bound to, or as identical with, the pursuit of any particular array of fundamental interests that they may have at any given time; instead, they conceive of themselves as capable of revising and altering these final ends and they give priority to preserving their liberty in this regard."<sup>48</sup> Whether we can consider Sandel's communitarian critique to be a devastating blow to Rawlsian theory is a more complex question that we cannot enter into here; it is enough to notice that Mounier thought all theorising that did not begin from a position of radical situatedness and belonging was prone to dangerous errors.

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<sup>46</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971 [1999]), 118-23.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 [1998]), 64.

<sup>48</sup> John Rawls, "A Well-Ordered Society," in *In Defense of Human Dignity: Essays of Our Times*, edited by Robert P Kraynak and Glenn Tinder (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 194.

## Conclusion

The Mounierian conception of the person is complex. The numerous influences on Mounierian thought pull the conception of the person back and forth between an individualist conception and a quasi-collectivist conception. What we have seen in this chapter is that the person is not simply a synonym for ‘the individual’ or ‘the self’, but the person is a singular and relational being. She elects her own values and has an independent existence.<sup>49</sup> She also requires others in order to know herself.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, to be a person means to be embedded in a circumstance and relationships.<sup>51</sup> The person is a social being who occupies a unique position in the world that she communicates to the world and listens to the perspectives of others to better understand her own life.<sup>52</sup>

The goal of this chapter was to present the person as an intersubjective self who is defined by her circumstance, in relationship to the other, and by being the highest form that human beings can become. This was accomplished by considering the definition of the person and the person-individual dialectic. The discussion of these issues prepares us for exploring the ontological claims in the next chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 523.

<sup>50</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24, 40, 42.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

## II

### The Person as *Nous*

« C'est encore mal imaginer la révélation du prochain que de le définir ainsi hors de moi comme une réalité séparée, si haute soit-elle. Sa réalité, c'est *nous deux* ; le lien qui nous unit en une seule chair spirituelle dans le Corps mystique du Christ est ce rapport unique que je tiens avec un être dont je ne parle plus à la troisième personne, comme d'une chose, mais à qui je commence à dire : *tu* »  
Emmanuel Mounier, *L'engagement de la foi*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Throughout Mounier's works, it is clear that the person is fundamentally a social being: "La personne individuelle isolée n'est ni un zéro, ni un infini, elle est une existence tronquée et partiellement impuissante. L'homme n'est pleinement que par et dans ses sociétés."<sup>2</sup> The person's 'prochain', that is, her neighbour, to borrow the Biblical phrasing,<sup>3</sup> is essential for her flourishing. The other is a gateway for the person: "Elle n'existe que vers autrui, elle ne se connaît que par autrui, elle ne se trouve qu'en autrui."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the other is so vital for the person that they form together a *nous*—an intersubjective relationship that respects the independence of being of each member. In this chapter, we analyse the *nous* and what this entails for the ontological claims Mounier makes about the person and personhood.

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *L'engagement de la foi* (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence, 2017), 44. Emphasis in original.

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, 'Y a-t-il une justice politique ?' *Esprit* 15, no. 8 (1947), 225.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 22:39.

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France—Quadrige, 2016), 40.

To do so, this chapter defends the central claim that the concept of the *nous* provides the ontological basis for the person to be simultaneously singular and relational, for the person maintains her independent existence whilst being able to move beyond herself and make an *engagement* to others that fosters their ability to pursue, what Mounier called, *comexistence*.<sup>5</sup> This is a bizarre term that Mounier aligned with the Heideggerian concept of *mitsein* or being-with. This is not the same as co-existence. The Heideggerian sense of *mitsein* (Mounier's *comexistence*) is best understood as a statement about the incarnation of persons in the world with other persons. We take the word to be not only a statement about the ontological reality of the person but also as a way of being that distinguishes personalism from individualism. For our purposes, we understand *comexistence* as the communication of one's existence with others; it is at its core a dialogical principle.

### **Sumus, ergo sum: The Ontological Claims of the *Nous***

In Mounier's œuvre, we find certain claims about what it is to be a person and what types of existence are non-personalist. This results in Mounier making a distinction between types of communities. It is important to our project to understand what non-personalist existence is.

Mounier distinguished this from non-personalist existences. There are two types of non-personalist existence: individualist and collectivist. For Mounier, the individualist existence is an empty life<sup>6</sup> that is unattached from others.<sup>7</sup> In Mounier's mind, the

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<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme ?*, in *Œuvres, tome iii* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 208.

<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution personnaliste et communautaire*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 296.

<sup>7</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 39.

individual is an artificial being manipulated by economic forces.<sup>8</sup> The treatment of individualism in Mounier's works is polemical and immoderate, which creates a challenge to grasp the criticisms he made. What he rejected was the gilded opulence of the bourgeois lifestyle that is concerned with the acquisition of capital and comfort at the expense of others.<sup>9</sup> The individual is self-centred and isolated in comfort.<sup>10</sup> Mounier juxtaposed this with the person whom he defined as generous and always seeking connexion with others. Mounier thought individualist existence entailed subjugating everything to capital and treating individuals as cogs in the machine—when one breaks, there are numerous other pieces that can replace it. Mounier thought that a similar phenomenon occurs with collectivist existence.

Mounier disliked collectivist existence because each being is absorbed into the mass. Here again, Mounier was polemical in his treatment of collectivist existence. The critiques are like those levelled against individualism; the main difference is that instead of being subjugated to capital, people are subjugated to the state, the nation, or the *volk*.<sup>11</sup> In this existence too, humans become replaceable and cogs in a machine.

Mounier's claims about what it means to be a person place weight on each person's uniqueness whilst recognising each person's place in the community. Thus, he makes a distinction between healthy and harmful types of collectivity. Society, which Mounier juxtaposes with community, results in anonymity. Society can take several forms, according to Mounier. Each form of society can be individualist or collectivist; at the core, none of the forms treat humans as persons. One of the worst forms is the mass, which is

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<sup>8</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 163.

<sup>9</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 493.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; Mounier, *Révolution*, 163.

<sup>11</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 503-07, 512-14.

the *monde de l'on*.<sup>12</sup> The next would be *sociétés en nous autres*, which is similar but different from the *monde de l'on*. For Mounier, fascist society is the exemplar form of *société en nous autres*.<sup>13</sup> It is a false understanding of a *nous* that delegates identity formation to an amorphous collective.<sup>14</sup> Mounier wrote that people “se démettent de toute initiative, de toute volonté propre, pour s’en reposer sur un homme qui voudra pour eux, jugera pour eux, agira pour eux. Quand il dira *je*, ils penseront *nous*, et se sentiront grandis d’autant [emphasis in original].”<sup>15</sup> It is clear why Mounier associated this sort of society with fascism: there is an inherent leader-cult relationship to it.

The next sort of society is the *société vitale*. This form of society is constituted by “le fait de vivre en commun un certain flux vital à la fois biologique et humain, et de s’organiser pour le vivre au mieux.”<sup>16</sup> This can take many forms. One example that Mounier gave is a group of Germans who happen upon each other whilst on vacation in Europe and, for a brief moment, share in the fact that they are all Germans although that is all, for “personne n’y a noué de liens très forts avec les autres membres, mais il y a tout un passé d’habitudes, d’événements, d’adaptations communes, un lit tout fait au flux vital.”<sup>17</sup> Relations that one might perceive as significant, such as belonging to the same national group or even citizens of the same country, is not significant for Mounier. These relations are on the ladder toward the ideal form of relations, but the *société vitale* is weighed down

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<sup>12</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

by inward looking and egoism.<sup>18</sup> Despite the inclination to look inward, Mounier thought that the *société vitale* prepares us for the ideal community.<sup>19</sup>

From here, there are two final sorts of societies; both are examples of the *société raisonnable*. These societies are essentially the result of social contract theory. The *société des esprits*, whose goal is “l’unanimité entre les individus et la paix entre les nations,”<sup>20</sup> would correspond with Immanuel Kant’s theory—here we are thinking about his work *Perpetual Peace* and even the law giving found in *Groundwork*. The final form of society is the *société juridique contractuelle*. These societies result from the individualist and collectivist social contract theories dating from Hobbes’s *Leviathan* through to Rousseau’s *Du contrat social*. The society relevant to our thesis and interpretation of Mounier’s works is a compilation of the *monde de l’on* and the *société juridique contractuelle*. Indeed, what marks society as non-personalist is the indifference that it engenders because each member of society leads an anonymous life.<sup>21</sup> Mounier’s response is to call for the establishment of the *nous*, which is synonymous with community.

Mounier introduced the idea of the *nous* in *Révolution personaliste et communautaire* (1935 [1961]). We can simply imagine the *nous* as the coming together of a person with another to form a person of persons.<sup>22</sup> We use this dyadic language merely as a base. This dyadic base is relevant, as it represents the core of interpersonal relationships based in true recognition and undergirds social organisation. The implications of this basic ideal become clear in the next chapter when we consider Mounier’s political

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 537.

<sup>22</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 194.

claims. True recognition requires the person to treat the other as a subject: “Le traiter comme un sujet, comme un être présent, c’est reconnaître que je ne peux le définir, le classer.”<sup>23</sup> For a *nous* relationship to develop, when persons meet each other, they need to recognise the other as a subject who can define himself.

The ability for each person to define herself marks her as an independent existence in all situations, yet she is always relational. The way that the person is both singular *and* relational can be perceived as paradoxical. On several occasions, Mounier wrote about how the person embarks upon a relationship with the other (*tu*), and their relationship (the *nous*) precedes the person (*je*).<sup>24</sup> Mounier thus appears to have contradicted himself, as the person clearly exists prior to the *nous*. However, the precedence that the *nous* has over the *je* and the *tu* is not temporal; rather the *nous* represents a type of final cause or telos, in the Aristotelian sense. Aristotle wrote that “the city is prior in the order of nature to the family and the individual. The reason for this is that the whole is necessarily prior to the part.”<sup>25</sup> Just as Aristotle accorded priority to the city—not temporally prior but in terms of final cause—so too does Mounier think that communal life is something like a final cause of the person. The concept of the *nous* is central to our resolution of the singular-relational tension, for this way of being preserves the person’s independence of being (*je*) whilst emphasising the person’s inherent relationality. The person is engaged in the *nous*, which means that she is interacting with others and making commitments to and with them. This *engagement* fosters the ability of humans to become persons.

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<sup>23</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme.*, 40; Mounier, *Qu’est-ce*, 230.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Ernest Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1253a, p.11.

*Engagement* is an important concept found in Mounier's writings. It has two meanings; both are important to our understanding of how the person and how she relates to others. The first meaning is that the person is incarnated in the world. The presence of the person in the world as an incarnated being means that she must engage with it and those who people the world. To do so, she needs to interact with them. This interaction leads to the second meaning of *engagement*, which represents the commitments made by persons; these commitments are freely chosen. This second meaning is different from hard contractualism found in the works of social contract theorists. An *engagement* sets out a relationship based on reciprocity and generosity tied to a particular milieu and history. This contrasts with a hard contractual relationship that sets out a series of duties that each individual undertakes when entering into a society. Individuals enter a hard contract when they leave the state of nature; the contract sets out the rights that they give up to peacefully live in society. *Engagement* is not about entering into a society; rather it is a commitment made between persons about their relationship to one another. These commitments are also different from other forms of contracts, that is, any form of contract undertaken in accordance with a law, for example, a lease agreement, is not a form of *engagement*. Neither are job contracts or related arrangements that promise an exchange of money. The commitments that count as an *engagement* are much closer to the type of commitments that couples make when they wed. This type of commitment reinforces a person's circumstance by situating her in a particular relationship. This makes sense, as the point of *engagement* is to situate a person and to exteriorise her. Exteriorisation means that the person is making thoughts and actions known to others, and these thoughts and actions move the person

beyond herself. The process of exteriorisation enables the person to discover herself in a committed relationship with others.

An easy way to distinguish a personalist grouping from a non-personalist grouping is the place occupied by the person or the individual. In the *nous*, each person's place is unique; no other person could replace her. In a non-personalist grouping, for example, a political party, if an individual leaves the party, the spot can be filled. Now, it is true that some might argue that one who devotes one's life to the party is integral to its functioning, and this might be true, but this individual is ultimately replaceable because the role is not exclusive or unique. Mounier used the example of the partisan<sup>26</sup> to demonstrate how individual members are subsumed into the party and recite party lines—Mounier viewed the party as an unthinking mass. The example of the partisan also gives us insight into the positions that persons fulfil in other spheres.

Consider how this would work in a professional setting. Every profession has positions that can be filled by qualified persons. Mounier was not saying that labourers could not be replaced or that even party members could not be replaced. His argument centred more on the figure of the person who filled the role. In other words, each person brings something unique to the roles that they fill. We can take his argument to mean that any person could become, for example, a great author, like Margaret Atwood or Gabrielle Roy, but no one else can become Margaret Atwood, Tommy Douglas, or Gabrielle Roy other than Margaret Atwood, Tommy Douglas, and Gabrielle Roy, respectively. Their persons precede their careers and other adjectives used to describe them. Giving the example of a fictitious person named Bernard Chartier, Mounier explained,

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<sup>26</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 188-89.

“Les milles manière dont je puis le déterminer comme *un* exemplaire d’une classe m’aident à le comprendre et surtout à l’utiliser, à savoir comment me comporter pratiquement avec lui. Mais ce ne sont que des coupes prises chaque fois sur un aspect de son existence. [emphasis in original]”<sup>27</sup> Mounier’s point was that we all have various aspects that make up our lives, yet none of these aspects define us as persons. In this way, we can occupy a position at work, then leave the position. What is being replaced are the qualifications necessary for the position and not the person who previously occupied the position.

This is quite different from how Mounier presented the *nous*. The *nous* is a somewhat vague way of discussing the spiritually nourishing relationships that the person requires. The main examples of spiritually nourishing relationships are the family, friends, romantic relations (specifically couples who are dating), and even neighbours. The first example, the family, is a *nous* unlike others, for one is born into this *nous*. The family “est une cellule sociale, la première des sociétés de l’enfant ; il y apprend les rapports humains, elle les entretient ensuite à portée du cœur, et c’est sa grandeur.”<sup>28</sup> In the same breath, Mounier also recognised that families do not provide enough intimate space for the person to become herself.<sup>29</sup> The person then branches out and makes friends with whom she can form other *nous*. Eventually, the person would find another with whom she could start her own family, which would, in theory, restart this whole process.

Although these examples represent the forms of spiritually nourishing relationships that would count as personalist, there are many other relationships that the person has that might not achieve the same spiritual nourishment. These relationships are quasi-

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<sup>27</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

personalist. The designation of quasi is important here because these relationships, for example, between colleagues, have characteristics of both personalist and non-personalist groupings. The latter characteristics would be that the person is fulfilling a certain position of employment that could be replaced. The former characteristics pertain to the person's ability to flourish and attain spiritual nourishment from the relationship. Colleagues are a great example of the quasi-personalist relationship, for they might be 'work friends' and nothing more. They are not forming a true *nous* or relationship. It is more of an ersatz *nous*, as the nourishment received is not as profound or consistent as from other *nous*. This does not mean that this sort of relationship is harmful to the person. It merely means that these relationships are not as meaningful for the person as a true *nous*. And so, they remain on a surface level, not receiving the nourishment that both require from the other.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have considered the ontological claims Mounier made about his conception of the person, specifically the concept of the *nous*. In this consideration, we defended the claim that the *nous* is an important component to understand the person as a communitarian being capable of retaining her independence of being within it. This exploration will be useful to us in the next chapter when we examine Mounier's political claims about the person and about the *cité personnaliste*.

### III.

#### How the *Nous* Changes Political Relations

« La politique n'est pas un but dernier,  
absorbant tous les autres. Néanmoins,  
si la politique n'est pas tout, elle est en tout. »  
Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Emmanuel Mounier's philosophy requires a substantial paradigmatic shift. He is asking us not to think of *moi* but of *nous*. We observe this outward sense in Mounier's definition of politics: "La réalité politique est composée des *personnes* qui cherchent à incarner leur volonté communautaire, et des *sociétés*, groupement d'hommes unis à la recherche d'une fin humaine quelconque ou simplement dans l'expression d'une parenté affective ou spirituelle [emphasis in original]." <sup>2</sup> What is striking is that for both the political reality and society, the purpose is communal. That is what we want to explore in this chapter. We strive to understand the political claims Mounier made about the person and the polity she inhabits.

The shift from a *moi*-centred politics to a *nous*-centred politics, for Mounier, also requires a shift in the medium of these relations. Mounier critiqued the individualist bourgeois order for the economic basis on which those relations are built. <sup>3</sup> Mounier preferred to centre relations on the person herself, which requires more dialogue between persons to establish duties, rights, and needs that are best satisfied by the community. The best way to achieve this, based on Mounier's own writings, is to interpret the  *cité personnaliste*  as founded on principles of democracy that take from

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France—Quadrige, 2016), 129.

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, in *Œuvre, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 615.

<sup>3</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 493.

liberal and republican conceptions of democracy. In this polity, the persons establish a state that guarantees the fundamental rights of each person and of communities.

In this chapter, we defend the central claim that the *nous* has an effect on political relations that results in persons establishing a commonly shared polity that assures each person her fundamental rights. We undertake our defence by elucidating how Mounier conceived of the body politic in the *cit  personnaliste* and how he understood the rights of persons and communities

The goal of this chapter is to clarify the liberal characteristics of Mounier's thought. This liberalism is not individualist; rather it is grounded in communitarian and personalist corporatist arguments. Mounierian or personalist liberalism denotes a system of organisation of the state and of its governance that protects the person's freedom to pursue her life and to flourish. In this system, the state is a tool created by persons to arbitrate disputes that arise between persons and between communities. Moreover, its job is to ensure the free exercise of rights and to guarantee the means for each person to flourish. Personalist liberalism relies on a communitarian understanding of being. Mounier proposed to organise government in the following fashion : (1) citizens have a direct vote for the executive as well as the government positions in addition to the election of a parliament, (2) power is divided across a variety of fields to avoid its concentration in the hands of one person or institution, and (3) the state is empowered to arbitrate disputes between persons and communities when there has been an infringement upon rights. We explore in greater details how Mounierian liberalism differs from the bourgeois liberal order that Mounier critiqued so immoderately.

## The Personalist Body Politic

Mounier designed a political order centred on the person that aims to create space for her flourishing so that she is no longer acting for individualist reasons nor for reasons of pure economic output. Mounier argued that “je dois d’abord assurer mon existence, et je ne le puis qu’avec l’autre et par l’autre, voulant qu’il soit lui-même dans sa vérité comme je m’efforce de le devenir dans la mienne.”<sup>4</sup> The securing of one’s self and that of the other leads each to think of the other and to make decisions with the other in mind. “L’homme personnel n’est pas un homme désolé,” wrote Mounier, “c’est un homme entouré, entraîné, appelé. C’est le grand péché de l’Occident de s’être dangereusement éloigné de cette vérité première.”<sup>5</sup> Mounier sought to remind humanity of its links, of the importance of others.

This idea of the communal expresses itself politically. Mounier focussed much attention on the community. The community described by Mounier is nothing more than the *nous* we explored in the previous chapter<sup>6</sup>: “L’apprentissage de la communauté, c’est donc l’apprentissage du prochain comme personne dans son rapport avec ma personne.”<sup>7</sup> The person’s learning of the other as a person means that the person recognises that the other also has unique characteristics that make the other irreplaceable. Together, the persons who constitute the community are perceived as a person of persons, which means that just like the unique persons who make up the community, the community itself requires protections.

Mounier provided for this protection with his *Déclaration des droits des personnes et des communautés*.<sup>8</sup> This declaration of rights that Mounier presented in May 1945 was meant to

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Introduction aux existentialismes*, in *Œuvres*, tome iii (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 140.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Qu’est-ce que le personalisme ?*, in *Œuvres*, tome iii (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 209.

<sup>6</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 191.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Les certitudes difficiles*, in *Œuvres*, tome iv (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1951), 99-104. We have included the entirety of the Declaration in an appendix for consultation.

rewrite the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* so that the declaration reflected actual human relations: Mounier included not only communal rights but also rights for women and for children.<sup>9</sup> For Mounier, the philosophy undergirding the 1789 Declaration drew from “une image grossièrement newtonienne des relations humaines des centres d'énergie théoriquement inépuisables (les libertés), des attractions (fraternité), des répulsions surtout (la sainte indépendance), un équilibre mathématique des forces (égalité), la Raison scientifique réglant le tout.”<sup>10</sup> What was missing was the human element.<sup>11</sup> This element is inserted by including rights that reflect the innate relational nature of the person. In “Mounier ou l'audace d'une nouvelle civilisation” (1987), Marie-Paule Lebel comments that Mounier did not completely discard the 1789 Declaration. Instead “Mounier élabor[a] de nouvelles propositions relatives à la protection de la femme et de l'enfant, à la santé et à l'intégrité physique, au droit au travail et à la sécurité.”<sup>12</sup> In this Mounierian declaration, we find Mounier's concern for the social and his distrust of the state. Mounier limited the role of the state. He wrote, “La fonction propre de l'État est d'aider activement à la fois l'indépendance des personnes et la vie des communautés.”<sup>13</sup> The state has a positive, active role to play in the person's life to ensure that she flourishes. This also means supporting the flourishing of the community. We agree with Lebel when she writes that “pour Mounier, le personnalisme est une pensée du social avant d'être une pensée de l'État.”<sup>14</sup> This is evidenced first by the role given to the state and by the framing of communal rights. Second, this is evidenced by Mounier's lengthy passages on the bourgeois liberal, the fascist, the communist, and the national-socialist states all of which tyrannise the person in their own ways.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Sections 25 and 26.

<sup>10</sup> Mounier, *Les certitudes*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Marie-Paule Lebel, “Mounier ou l'audace d'une nouvelle civilisation” (Master's diss., Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, 1987), 157.

<sup>13</sup> Mounier, *Les certitudes*, 99.

<sup>14</sup> Lebel, 120.

Mounier presented his declaration in the immediate postbellum period. This is significant because he was reacting to the trauma that had occurred during the war. Indeed, we argue that it is logical that Mounier included communal rights in his declaration because of the way that minority groups, namely Jews, Roma people, queer people, and others, suffered and were exterminated. These rights also belong to the way that Mounier wanted to conceive of society in the interbellum period: we see Mounier's rejection of capital and his desire to humanise relationships. Thus, the schedule of rights called 'droits des communautés' "rappelle la primauté du travail sur le capital, du service sur le privilège, de la consommation sur la production."<sup>15</sup> It also secured the rights of minority groups within society: "La nation possède un droit absolu à l'indépendance de sa culture, de sa langue, de sa vie spirituelle, mais non à la souveraineté politique inconditionnée. Elle doit protéger, dans les limites de sa cohésion, les communautés régionales, ethniques, linguistiques ou religieuses groupées dans son sein."<sup>16</sup> Although Mounier attributed these rights to the community, which here refers to the *nous* as well as minority group communities, such as those outlined above, it is in fact singular persons who enjoy these rights as members of the community, as these rights afford them further protections. The communal rights supplement the 'droits des personnes' and ensure that quality of life and protection of life is guaranteed for each member of the  *cité personnaliste*.

The rights that Mounier enumerated have a very liberal feel to them. In section 2, Mounier writes, "Les hommes, inégaux par leurs talents ou leurs fonctions, sont tous égaux, quelles que soient leurs capacités, leur race, leur classe ou leur sexe, devant ces droits fondamentaux. Aucune

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Mounier, *Les certitudes*, 103.

loi d'exception ne peut être promulguée en fonction d'un de ces facteurs.”<sup>17</sup> He argued that each person is equal thanks to the fact that she is a human being. This is influenced by liberal thought.

In order to determine just how liberal a Mounierian state might be, we should consider how community sentiment might clash with individual rights. A common liberal critique of communal rights is that they tend to trample upon an individual's own freedom to pursue his own good in his own manner.

A prime example of being able to pursue one's own freedom is personalism's rejection of attempts to ban all forms of Islamic headscarves. We could find a communitarian argument to ban headscarves on the grounds that headscarves represent an offence to a certain way of life of a community. However, Mounier would push back on this argument. For a defence of the headscarf, we can look to sections 3, 7, and 12. Section 7 states, “Les hommes sont libres de leurs mouvements, de leurs paroles, de leurs écrits ou de leurs actes, dans la mesure où ceux-ci ne violent pas la présente Déclaration ou les lois promulguées en harmonie avec elle. La liberté sous ses diverses formes doit servir la dignité personnelle de chacun et le bien de tous. Elle est inaliénable et engage la responsabilité de chacun.”<sup>18</sup> And section 12 states, “Tout homme est libre de parler, d'écrire, d'imprimer et de publier pensées, opinions et informations, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi, en conformité notamment de l'article 6.”<sup>19</sup> It is important to include section 3 because any ban of the headscarf—or any religious garb—can be viewed as a degradation of the person's moral integrity. Section 3 states, “Tout homme a droit à l'intégrité physique et morale de sa personne. En dehors des mesures prévues par le Droit pénal, il ne peut lui être imposé ni violences systémiques, ni traitements dégradants, ni mutilations motivées

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> Mounier, *Les certitudes*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

par sa non-intégrité physique ou mentale, ni aucune forme de pression sur la volonté, fût-ce au de l'intérêt supérieur de la société."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, we can find a communal rights defence of the headscarf. This defence arises, we argue, directly from the horrors of the Holocaust because section 29 explicitly grants protection to religious minorities in the *cit  personnaliste*.<sup>21</sup> This means that any law banning headscarves would constitute a violation not only of one's singular right to free expression but also of the right of religious groups to live freely.

This case is indicative of a liberal quality to Mounier's communitarian personalism. This conforms with his desire to humanise the declaration. Mounier's effort to humanise the declaration includes the incorporation of communal rights. It is perhaps better to understand the communal rights as ensuring a communal body politic more than ascribing rights to a community because none of these rights impede the singular rights accorded in the preceding 'droits des personnes' schedule. The communal rights allow for a pluralist and federal body politic. Mounier's declaration devolves power down to communities.<sup>22</sup> We can understand this as advocating for a subsidiarist body politic with a corporatist understanding of economic organisation.

The *cit  personnaliste* is a collection of different communities and persons who come together to form a new body; each part contributes to and strengthens the whole. This body is the nation. We can understand the nation as "l'accolade qui r unit ce foisonnement spontan  de soci t s diverses entourant les personnes, sous l'unit  vivante d'une tradition historique et d'une culture particularis e dans son expression, mais en puissance d'universalit ."<sup>23</sup> The nation is the collection of communities and binds them; however, the community still supersedes the nation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-03.

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *De la propri t  capitaliste   la propri t  humaine*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris:  ditions du Seuil, 1961), 475.

<sup>23</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 615.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

To adjudicate the disagreements and ensure the fundamental rights of all, a state is established. The state plays a crucial but minor role. Its role is to guarantee the flourishing of persons and communities.

The state is not the same as the nation, the community, or the person. It is an artificial object made to serve the person.<sup>25</sup> For Mounier, “L’État, serviteur des personnes, a fonction de mettre à la disposition de ces initiatives les mécanismes de liaison qui faciliteront leurs efforts.”<sup>26</sup> The state has a positive role to provide opportunities for the person and the community to flourish. In doing so, the personalist state<sup>27</sup> can insist upon a certain value system that conforms with the declaration. Emmanuel-Martin Meunier comments that, “l’État personnaliste a cependant pour principal rôle de veiller à ce que toutes les initiatives des communautés spirituelle, idéologique ou régionale n’entraient ni ‘le statut fondamental de la personne’ ni ‘la libre concurrence des communautés’ entre elles.”<sup>28</sup> To ensure the free competition and the fundamental status of the person, the state can indeed impose a certain value system. The imposition of values aligns with a more republican view of the state because the state’s job is to facilitate socialisation.

This socialisation can occur through what Mounier called the free competition of spiritual communities.<sup>29</sup> The idea of communities competing raises several questions. We take this idea to mean that Mounier wanted competition to be more of a spiritual exercise than an economic one. The risk with Mounier’s free competition is that it could lead to sectarianism and a breakdown in communication between communities. This need not be the case. It might be utopic, but this competition could foster greater efforts of dialogue and communication, as it would require

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<sup>25</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 129.

<sup>26</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 616.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

<sup>28</sup> Emmanuel-Martin Meunier, *Le pari personnaliste : Modernité et catholicisme au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Québec: Éditions Fides, 2007), 158.

<sup>29</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 617.

persons to place themselves in the viewpoint of others to broaden their horizons. The efforts by the state to facilitate this competition are important because “L’État personnaliste n’est pas une Église, ou un substitut d’Église, il n’est non plus un simple appareil technique, philosophiquement neutre et indifférent comme l’est, au moins en théorie l’État libéral. L’État personnaliste n’est pas neutre, il est personnaliste.”<sup>30</sup> This means that the state has a stake in ensuring that dialogue is maintained between the competing spiritual communities for the benefit of the common good. This is an example of the republican and liberal elements of the state working in tandem that results in a form of perfectionist liberalism. The state’s efforts to facilitate socialisation is the republican element, and the ability for persons to choose between communities is more liberal because the person is free to elect to which community she wants to adhere. Moreover, the state devolves to each community certain decision-making abilities that aid the competition.

Devolving decision-making power to smaller entities occurs on two axes. The first is a vertical axis that divides powers between different sectors of the polity. The other axis is horizontal, which represents all the groupings of persons in municipalities and other forms of corporation. Each cross-section of the axis can freely elect how best to pursue the common good that enables each person in its jurisdiction to flourish. Mounier wanted persons and communities to act freely. To that end, much like the liberal state, Mounier’s state does not direct the free pursuits of persons or communities.<sup>31</sup> The difference, for Mounier, is that state ensures that the core beliefs of personalism—primarily, the primacy of the person and centring of all issues on the person—be embedded in the fibre of all institutions and bodies of the state.

The state is able to serve the communities and persons best by devolving power to smaller entities: “Il confie à des organismes économiques et sociaux, associatifs ou syndicaux largement

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

autonomes, à des gouvernements locaux, à des groupements spirituels de larges moyens d’initiative et de contrôle.”<sup>32</sup> This creates a somewhat anti-statist environment, since the role of the state is reduced, but the state reserves some competences that are limited by law to avoid abuses of power.<sup>33</sup> This results in a corporatist vision of the body politic and the state: each element of the body politic requires representation. We should note that this is not fascist corporatism as codified by Mussolini’s Labour Charter of 1927. Mounier argued that the way fascism subordinated the person to the state is the peak of anti-personalism: “[l]’antipersonnalisme du fascisme ... est radical.”<sup>34</sup> An example that Mounier offered of his perception of fascism as antipersonalist is the Labour Charter that begins by subordinating everything to the state;<sup>35</sup> Mounier flips this and places the person at the top of the pyramid, with institutions below her to serve her. And so, personalist corporatism is more akin to the person of persons conception of community.

We should pause here for a brief defence of Mounier. Some commentators, such as Zeev Sternell, would view our distancing of Mounier from fascist corporatism—and fascism writ large—as incorrect, for Mounier was initially sympathetic to Vichy France in 1940. We cannot deny that Mounier was sympathetic at the advent of Vichy rule. Mounier believed that Vichy might create a personalist-inspired regime; however, he was quickly disabused of this notion and came to see Vichy as nothing more than a French form of fascism and national socialism—two things that he vehemently opposed and rejected.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jean-François Petit, *La personne au secours de l’humain : 30 études personalistes* (Paris: Paroles et Silence, 2018), 254.

<sup>33</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 617.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 503.

<sup>36</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 223-28; Mounier, *Manifeste*, 499-507.

What is curious about Sternhell is that he is careful throughout to not call Mounier a fascist, but he attributes Mounier's steadfast anti-parliamentarianism and anti-liberalism to a pseudo-fascist position. Sternhell argues, "il y a chez Mounier ... une certaine indulgence, une certaine compréhension à l'égard du fascisme, souvent même une certaine admiration, qui provient essentiellement de leur perception commune de la faiblesse et des insuffisances de la démocratie libérale."<sup>37</sup> This argument seeks to equate similar critiques of the *désordre établi* with being sympathetic to each other's causes. This is an erroneous reading of the situation.

It is true that both critique liberal democracy; however, the fascist project has nothing to do with the personalist project. The former deifies the nation, imposes it on the person, and makes room for a dictatorial strongman, such as Mussolini, Franco, or Portugal's António Salazar, to dominate over every person. The personalist project rejects all these points. Moreover, the fascists seek to create a large state; fascism can be characterised as a statist ideology. Mounier is clear that the personalist state is small and is to leave room for the person and for communities to flourish in their plurality. For Mounier, "L'essentiel est que l'État s'efface après chaque initiative. [emphasis added]"<sup>38</sup> This is very different from the fascists and even Vichy.

Mounier is a complicated figure. His goal from the beginning was to find a path between excessive individualism and excessive collectivism, which would allow the placing of the person (a revived Christian understanding of the self)<sup>39</sup> at the heart of his project. His project is communitarian at its core. Sternhell's interpretation of the communitarian impulse being equivalent to fascist desires is dangerous because his line of argument suggests that any anti-liberal and anti-communist critique is necessarily fascist or accepting of fascism. Moreover, the desire to dislodge

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<sup>37</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche : L'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983), 301.

<sup>38</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 618.

<sup>39</sup> Terrence C Wright, "Emmanuel Mounier on the Person and Vocation," *Logos* 20, no. 1 (2017), 46.

individualism and re-spiritualise the self is, then, seen as ‘suspect’ and a ‘slippery slope’ toward fascism.

What should be noted is that perhaps the man and the philosophy need to be separated. Mounier saw hope—perhaps naïvely—in the initial Vichy regime. This action should not characterise Mounier and personalism as fascist or condoning fascism. He was hopeful that since the liberal democratic order had collapsed, the new order that was being established could take on a personalist edge. In the end, it did not, but this should not condemn Mounierian personalism. The totality of Mounier’s writings suggests more convincingly a perfectionist liberal interpretation.

Returning to our discussion of Mounierian corporatism, we note importantly that corporatism can be viewed as illiberal. However, Mounierian corporatism is not incompatible with the liberal elements that we have identified in Mounier’s thought. Mounier is unfortunately unclear about which bodies might act as mediators in his corporatist regime. We suggest that unions, guilds, and other factors that would empower persons would be relevant in a personalist corporatist regime. Other institutions named in Mounier’s works are schools, churches, and even what we could call ‘ethnic community associations.’ Mounier’s corporatism has two elements that illustrate its liberalism: (1) it is reliant upon a structure of divided powers and (2) it is based in democratic and dialogical principles that result in communal decision-making. In the first instance, Mounier divides power to avoid abuses thereof.<sup>40</sup> He proposed devolving power down to autonomous local governments, economic and spiritual groupings (for example, unions, guilds, and religious groups), and various other intermediary organs. In addition to spreading power downward, Mounier also sought to create a dynamic and ever-rejuvenating supreme council (similar to a

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<sup>40</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 616.

Supreme Court), whose sole mission is to protect persons and their ability to flourish.<sup>41</sup> The second instance is how decisions are made. Mounier wanted this to be done communally, as whatever decisions are made, they affect all. Decision-making would be devolved down from the central authority to the level closest to persons. This is consistent with the economic rights Mounier proposed that guarantee that persons have a say in working conditions and to the fruits of their labour. This is neither classical liberalism nor even neoliberalism: in these rights, we find protections for the person that others cannot impede and that the state must defend. Instead, it is a personalist and communitarian liberalism.

The communal decision-making aspect of Mounierian corporatism is quite democratic. It is reliant upon the members of the community dialoguing and voting on decisions. Mounier was sparse on details for how this would work, yet we can deduce that communities, understood here as neighbourhoods or even municipalities, would come together to make decisions by ballot. In their respective spheres, we can imagine unions, guilds, and even businesses also making similar decisions based on approval by dialogue and by ballot. At the core, this process is dialogical insofar as the members of the community need to dialogue to come to a decision. This is a challenge, as it requires the community members to all belong to the same *nous*. As we know, this is not an easy process. Each person needs to place herself in the perspective of the others to make the decision that respects each person. Smaller countries are more conducive to personalist politics for this reason.<sup>42</sup>

The *cit  personnaliste* that Mounier envisaged is corporatist and democratic. The sort of democracy that Mounier proposed requires an examination, which we explore later in this chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 624.

In the next section, we consider the economic proposal made by Mounier as a clear statement of his anti-capitalism.

### **Thinking Through Personalist Economics**

The economic model proposed by Mounier is clearly anti-capitalist. For Mounier, this meant not only rejecting the traditional bourgeois capitalist order but also Nazism and fascism because Mounier held that these two far-right ideologies were capitalism on steroids.<sup>43</sup> This view of capitalism is one Mounier shared with other leftist thinkers, notably Marxist thinkers. As Burgos points out, it is true that Mounier “professed an innate sympathy for anarchism and Marxism, although this did not inhibit him from being aware of their limits or the problems that they presented.”<sup>44</sup> One of the main issues Mounier had with Marxism is its one-sided preoccupation with the material well-being of humankind. This is not to say that Mounier was unconcerned by material well-being; but he believed that spiritual renewal was more important than material comfort. Mounier thought most anti-capitalist theories were weakened by their materialism.<sup>45</sup> Mounier wrote, “Nous désignons comme matérialisme une philosophie qui, tout en insistant justement sur un humanisme du travail et de la fonction fabricatrice, considère comme illusoire d’autres dimensions non moins essentielles de l’homme, notamment l’intériorité et la transcendance. Et, comme semi-matérialiste, une philosophie qui tend à dévaloriser les secondes par rapport aux premières.”<sup>46</sup> By pointing out the faults of materialist philosophies, he was not pushing for a *pure* spiritualism that he took to have “confond[u] le destin de l’homme avec des

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<sup>43</sup> Mounier, *Révolution*, 224.

<sup>44</sup> Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, translated by RT Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 79.

<sup>45</sup> Mounier, *Qu’est-ce*, 183.,

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

bavardages de l'esprit sur l'esprit, et détourn[é] la force même de l'esprit vers les paradis artificiels au service de toutes les basses œuvres."<sup>47</sup> His rejection of this *pure* spiritualism rests on the fact that it is disconnected from lived reality. Mounier wanted a response to capitalism that was cognisant of material and spiritual realities. According to Mounier, "le premier pas de la 'révolution spirituelle', c'est la révolution économique et politique qui lui fraye un chemin jusqu'à ces destins trop offusqués encore par les soucis élémentaires de la défense vitale pour aller jusqu'à elle."<sup>48</sup> Thus, to obtain the reality centred on the person and her relationships with others, we must consider the economic questions that are holding us back.

In *Qu'est-ce que le personnalisme ?*, Mounier provided a succinct, if still general, statement of the economic model he believed to be personalist:

Le personnalisme en effet considère que les structures du capitalisme se dressent aujourd'hui en travers du mouvement de libération de l'homme, et qu'elles doivent être détruites au profit d'une organisation socialiste de la production et de la consommation. Ce socialisme, nous ne l'avons pas inventé. Il est né de la peine des hommes et de leur réflexion sur les désordres qui les oppriment. Personne ne le réalisera sans ceux mêmes qui l'ont tiré de leur propre destin. Il comporte, sous l'angle humain, deux exigences capitales. Il ne doit pas remplacer l'impérialisme des intérêts privés par la tyrannie des pouvoirs collectifs : il faut donc lui trouver une structure démocratique, sans affaiblir la rigueur des mesures qu'il devra prendre pour installer et défendre ses premières conquêtes. Par ailleurs, il est nécessairement conduit, dans nos civilisations industrielles, par l'élite organisée des travailleurs ; mais nos sociétés étant des sociétés de structure complexe, il doit chercher, autour de ce noyau directeur, à grouper un aussi large consentement que possible.<sup>49</sup>

Mounier was quite clear in this rich passage: personalism rejects capitalism and embraces a form of socialist economics that is truly democratic. This means that Mounier was not rejecting Western capitalism in favour of (Stalinist) Soviet collectivist-totalitarian socialist economics. Instead,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Mounier, *Qu'est-ce*, 244.

Mounier sought a socialist economic model that was far more anarchic (in line with Proudhon) than what we could call ‘mainstream’ socialists of the mid-twentieth century were proposing.<sup>50</sup> Although a rejection of Western capitalism, there remains a somewhat libertarian element to Mounier’s economic socialism, namely in the way that he understood consumption.

Mounier wanted economics to favour the person. He viewed the whole of the capitalist system as oriented toward the production of profit. Mounier wanted to reorder the economy according to personalist principles so that the economy “*règle au contraire le profit sur le service rendu dans la production, la production sur la consommation, et la consommation sur une éthique des besoins humains replacée dans la perspective totale de la personne.*”<sup>51</sup> (emphasis in original) If the capitalist economy is a pyramid with profit at its pinnacle, Mounier wanted to flip the pyramid on its head. To do so, Mounier proposed a middle ground between “*la collectivisation et les exigences de la personne.*”<sup>52</sup> The best way to describe this middle ground economic view might be libertarian socialism or as a robust welfare economy.<sup>53</sup> To understand what Mounier proposed, we focus on three intertwined elements: (1) remuneration, (2) the bisectoral nature of the economy, and (3) consumption.

1. We begin with remuneration. Briefly, the person is an incarnated presence in the world, and she has certain needs that must be met. These needs are what Mounier called “*la zone du nécessaire vital strict.*”<sup>54</sup> All humans share in these needs, so the economy (and more precisely the

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<sup>50</sup> Mounier’s works were quite influential for a significant movement in the United States called the Catholic Worker Movement. Founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the movement is heavily inspired (at least at its origins) by Mounierian personalism. This movement is often classed as part of the Christian anarchist current, which coincides with some, if not most, of the economic positions advanced by Mounier.

<sup>51</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 592.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 605.

<sup>53</sup> We could even go so far as to call it social democratic, but that title would imply that the economy is still capitalist at its core.

<sup>54</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 593.

polity) should provide this basic minimum. This is merely the minimum that persons require to meet their basic needs. Anything above those basic needs brings us to the other form of remuneration.

Mounier was less clear on how this remuneration would work. Given that Mounier believed work to be an obligation,<sup>55</sup> this second form of remuneration would derive from that work. Above the basic minimum, everything is superfluous and subject to additional remuneration gained through working. The fact that work is an obligation changes the nature of relations between persons. It has the effect of demarketising relations, as Mounier was clear that the person's labour is not a commodity;<sup>56</sup> rather it is an inalienable right that the person has.<sup>57</sup> This also changes the nature of the labour that the person does in one of the two broad sectors of the economy.

2. Mounier proposed that there be two sectors of the personalist economy: the planned and the free. The planned sector fulfils the basic needs of persons: we can class, for example, agriculture, the education industry, natural resource development (renewable and non-renewable), the garment industry, and the public service as basic needs. This is not an exhaustive list of basic needs, so it is possible that other industries be included. This planned sector is not necessarily rife with state enterprises. It would in fact be a best to have a mix of state-run organisations and heavily regulated enterprises handle this sector of the economy.<sup>58</sup> The non-state enterprises are described as “des entreprises corporatives libres,”<sup>59</sup> which suggests that guilds and other such entities would take a leading role in delivering public goods. This would allow farmers, for example, to remain

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 597.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 605.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

‘private’ insofar as determining how and what they produce according to the public needs instead of being subject to collectivist agricultural policies. Although there is some freedom allotted to the non-state entities, this sector remains highly regulated and committed to producing public goods. This is quite different from the free sector of the economy.

Much like with remuneration, this sector of the economy satisfies personal desires and is partially superfluous. This sector focusses on “la libre creation et la libre émulation.”<sup>60</sup> This sector is where human creativity and passion can shine. Even though it is free, it is not anarchic. Mounier wanted this sector to be “organisé selon une formule de coopération ou de corporatisme post-capitaliste.”<sup>61</sup> This means that there exists a sort of network of guilds and unions that help to direct and act as resources for the various endeavours upon which persons in the free sector of the economy embark. The purpose of this sector is the pursuit of passions that persons might have.

3. The final element of the economy to consider is consumption. In a standard, Soviet-style planned economy, one consumes what is produced by the state. Everything is planned. There is no creativity. For Mounier, “La consommation est une activité personnelle ; *elle doit donc rester libre.*”<sup>62</sup> (emphasis in original) It is counterproductive to impose a standard of consumption on personal desires. This is the most libertarian (and even liberal) aspect of the personalist economy. However, even though it is libertarian in terms of its fulfilment of personal desires, there are still limits imposed. On this topic, Georges Ngango wrote that consumption “subit des limitations de deux orders qui proviennent de la conscience individuelle d’une part, d’autre part des exigences de la collectivité qui est obligée pour le bien de tous de régler sa consommation sur la conjuncture

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

économique nationale et internationale.”<sup>63</sup> In other words, whatever one consumes freely is somewhat determined by outside pressures that keep the economy functioning. But this results primarily from the public demands for certain products that assist in the free development of persons.

### **Thinking Through Personalist Democracy**

Mounier had a particular idea of democracy, different from how we would usually understand it. In a sense, the word ‘democracy’ might not even be suitable for the  *cité personaliste*. Lebel comments that Mounier “hésit[a] même entre ‘démocratie’ and ‘république.’”<sup>64</sup> Mounier believed, “La démocratie n’est pas la suprématie du nombre, qui est une forme d’oppression. Elle n’est que la recherche des moyens politiques destinés à assurer à toutes les personnes, dans une cité, le droit au libre développement et au maximum de responsabilité.”<sup>65</sup> For Mounier, democracy then means any regime that fulfils these criteria. This rejection of numerical majority rule makes engaging with other democratic theories a challenge. However, our task is not to engage with other theories of democracy even though that would be a fruitful discussion. Our task is to demonstrate that the Mounierian personalist conception of democracy is dialogical and a hybrid liberal-republican conception.

Before we show how it is a hybrid, let us propose two ideas of democracy. A liberal idea of democracy centres on the idea of representative governance, selected by citizens in free and fair elections. The government operates within the confines of the constitution that creates a polity wherein citizens are free to pursue their own meaningful ends, i.e., their own ideas of the good,

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<sup>63</sup> Georges Ngango, “La pensée économique d’Emmanuel Mounier,” in *Emmanuel Mounier ou le combat du juste* (Bordeaux: Ducros, 1968), 192.

<sup>64</sup> Lebel, 159.

<sup>65</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 623.

without the state imposing a particular conception of the good. The state is a neutral actor who arbitrates relations between citizens when a citizen's rights are impinged upon by another. The ultimate goal of the state is to maximise each citizen's freedom to pursue the life that they wish. This is quite different from a republican idea of democracy.

A republican idea of democracy centres on the idea of creating a cohesive polity whose aim is to socialise and integrate citizens into its conception of the good. Each citizen is free to make life choices, but all these choices adhere to the common good. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the political process at more points than just elections. The state's role is to protect the rights of citizens. Unlike in the liberal idea of democracy that promotes negative rights, in the republican idea of democracy, citizens have positive rights protected by the state and acted upon by the state. This means that state takes on a more active role than the liberal state, as the republican state ensures that citizens have their rights provided for. In this idea of democracy, the state's goal is to maximise each citizen's ability to flourish.

On the surface, these two definitions should not be able to cohabitate in the same polity. Many of the state-led initiatives that would happen in a republican democracy would be inconceivable in a liberal democracy. For example, in the republican idea of democracy, citizens have positive rights, which means that the state has a duty to provide certain things, such as housing. The state has a more active role in the lives of citizens. This is different from the liberal state, which tends to allow citizens to pursue their private interests without interference. Personalist democracy is the result of a search for the balance between these two models. This means that the state creates space for persons and communities to develop their own interests whilst actively ensuring that persons are participating in civil society to contribute to the common good of the entire *cit e personnaliste*. This form of democracy insists on the dialogical nature of political

relations that results in the establishment of rights and duties for persons, communities, and the state. This makes personalist democracy a hybrid liberal-republican regime. This means that although the relations between persons are not primarily economic, the personalist state has juridical powers that guarantee the person the free exercise of her rights insofar as her exercise thereof does not infringe upon the free exercise of others,<sup>66</sup> for the state has the duty to enable each person to flourish without interference.<sup>67</sup> This flourishing is partially akin to the liberal idea that each individual should be free to pursue his own ends. However, as Mounier says, “L’État n’a pas seulement ce rôle négatif.”<sup>68</sup> Here we find a solid personalist argument that shows republican influence. The state actively puts forward opportunities for persons and communities. Moreover, it brings together diverse groups and integrates them for the person’s and community’s benefit.<sup>69</sup>

Political relations are meant to accentuate free development<sup>70</sup> and to protect minorities,<sup>71</sup> as guaranteed by the declaration.<sup>72</sup> There is another element: proximity. The democratic order provided for by Mounier is best realised in proximal milieux. This means in smaller units: “La démocratie personaliste est un régime pour petites nations. Les grandes nations ne peuvent la réaliser qu’en dissociant le pouvoir afin d’arrêter les pouvoirs les uns par les autres.”<sup>73</sup> (emphasis in original) A larger nation would result in a form of domination over smaller nations, so to avoid this occurring, Mounier believed his idea of democracy to be more suited to small units. In the current Canadian system, we could perhaps interpret this to mean municipalities, but there is a lack of clarity in Mounier’s works to clearly define ‘proximal’ other than to favour smaller units over

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 616.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 616.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 623.

<sup>71</sup> Petit, 248.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Section 29.

<sup>73</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 624.

larger ones. The danger, however, with proximity is that the society can turn inward and quash personal flourishing.<sup>74</sup> This could, then, give rise to a *société vitale*, which would make the small unit a non-personalist. Despite this risk, proximity remains the best way to foster dialogue in a polity because communication is less likely to break down when the two interlocutors are near each other.

Mounier is cautious, however, of smaller units. “Donner trop au pouvoir local,” he wrote, “encouragerait des particularismes dont les nations modernes se sont à peine désinfectées, et ramènerait les communautés nationales adultes à quelque état social puéril. Le personnalisme doit se garder de conclure hâtivement à on ne sait quelle conception granulaire de la société qui ne serait qu’une expression tout extérieure au personnalisme.”<sup>75</sup> To make sure that particularisms do not override communal interests, the state needs to protect rights and ensure the inclusion of all.

Mounier wanted to guard against local and centralised tyrannies. He created a system that parcelled out power to various groups: “La cité pluraliste se constituera au sommet sur un ensemble de pouvoirs autonomes : pouvoir économique, pouvoir judiciaire, pouvoir éducatif, etc. Dans ce morcellement vertical devra jouer une articulation horizontale d’inspiration fédéraliste.”<sup>76</sup> Mounier sought a strong structure of division of powers that would mitigate against the concentration of too much power in one spot, whether local or central. This has a rather liberal quality to it, in the line of Montesquieu’s division of powers. Mounier took it a step further; he separated the judiciary, the legislative, and the executive like Montesquieu, then he made additional vertical divisions as well to break up any concentration of power in the hands of, for example, economic elites. Each unit maintains some authority over certain elements, which

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 614.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 624.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

connect them with other units. Mounier referred to this as a form of federalism; it is also a form of subsidiarity, as decision-making is devolved down to the smallest possible unit (at times this is the person, at times it is the *nous*, and at others it could be a grouping of *nous*, for example, a village or municipality).

The most liberal element of what Mounier called “le nouvel état”<sup>77</sup> is that there is some sort of parliament that is elected.<sup>78</sup> Mounier did not provide much description of this new state, but he did write, “L’exécutif doit rester contrôlé par la démocratie directe, mais échapper aux intrigues et aux caprices du Parlement : on voit par exemple un gouvernement élu par le Parlement, poste par poste ... pour une période fixe.”<sup>79</sup> In Mounier’s description, the proposed government is kept in check “entre deux périodes électorales [par des] referendum[s] d’initiative populaire.”<sup>80</sup> In addition to the referenda, the parliament is also checked by “les grandes communautés nationales (économique, éducative, judiciaire, etc.)”<sup>81</sup> that constitute part of the corporatist regime designed by Mounier.

### **Mounierian Liberalism**

Mounier stated clearly, “Nous ne sommes pas des libéraux.”<sup>82</sup> His reasoning is that Truth “ne peut rester ‘affaire privée,’ qu’elle doit pénétrer les institutions comme les individus.”<sup>83</sup> Mounier made this claim in his discussion of the state. For Mounier, the state cannot be neutral; therefore, Truth, as he phrased it, must remain public. Most liberal theorist argue for a neutral public square. Rawls devises a whole theory of justice meant to avoid predicating justice on any

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 625.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 626.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 625.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

single comprehensive doctrine. Mounierian liberalism is different from most varieties of liberalism. Mounier's project is fundamentally communitarian with liberal elements in it that are from a collection of different varieties of liberalism, notably from the English liberal tradition.<sup>84</sup>

In this section, we indicate the passages that illustrate Mounier's liberalism. Our argument revolves around four points:

- 1- The person's status as an absolute with dignity. This has a direct Kantian heritage.
- 2- The schedule of negative rights held by the person, which can also be found in a variety of liberal theories.
- 3- The state's negative role akin to the depiction of the state by several liberal theorists.
- 4- The parliament as a clear liberal institution and element in Mounierian personalism.

These stand out as examples of what we can call Mounierian or personalist liberalism. What is notable is that the economic aspect is not constitutive of this variety of liberalism.

Indeed, when we consider the aspects of liberalism that are present in Mounier's works, we find that liberal elements are introduced in narrow contexts: in terms of the person's 'worth' and juridical elements of the state (including the legislative levers). This narrowness is relevant to our argument because our argument is not that Mounier developed a completely liberal philosophy; rather our argument is that despite Mounier's immoderate denunciation of liberalism (conflating it with the worst excesses of individualism and capitalism), there are clear elements of his philosophy that have liberal characteristics.

The first of these characteristics is related to the person's being. Mounier adopted a Kantian perspective on the 'worth' or 'value' of the person. In *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, Mounier presented the person as an end that can never be used as a means.<sup>85</sup> This is the same

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<sup>84</sup> In this tradition, we include thinkers such as John Locke, John Stuart Mills, and others.

<sup>85</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 524.

argument that Kant made in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785 [1993]).<sup>86</sup> This is unsurprising, as some scholars would class Kant as the ‘first’ personalist.<sup>87</sup> We do not have the space to consider the veracity of this claim, but we advance that Kant was influential on personalist thought. Kant’s formulation of the person as an end endows the person with dignity. In Mounier’s work, the formulation of dignity is less explicit than in Kant’s work, but it amounts to the same thing: persons are ends unto themselves that deserved to be treated only as such.

It is also possible to consider the relationship between the person and others, namely viewing others as subjects (ends) unto themselves, as an extension of this Kantian principle. This is evident in Mounier when he wrote, “Je traite autrui comme un objet quand je le traite comme un absent ... Le traiter comme un sujet, comme un être present, c’est reconnaître que je ne peux le définir, le classer.”<sup>88</sup> This passage points to a certain type of liberalism, for it is not always the case that liberal thought conceives of others as subjects. In the current hegemonic neoliberal order, others appear to be viewed as objects, as means to make profit. Mounier’s argument, drawing on Kant, is certainly opposed to treating people as human capital; he wishes to insist on their fundamental dignity. This valuing of persons in this manner influences other aspects of personalist thought. An inherent respect of the dignity of the person is present in all aspects of Mounier’s writings. This is clear in his formulation of the rights found in *Les certitudes difficiles* (1951). Both negative and positive rights respect the person’s dignity.

This formulation of rights, notably the negative rights, is another liberal characteristic of Mounier’s thought. Rights and rights discourse are not limited to liberal thought, but they are commonly associated with liberal thought. And likewise, negative rights are not inherently liberal;

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<sup>86</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Ltd., 1993), 36.

<sup>87</sup> Burgos, 18

<sup>88</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 42.

however, negative rights are most notably associated with liberal thought. It is not only the presence of negative rights in the schedule of rights proposed by Mounier that leads us to assert that Mounier's works have liberal qualities, but it is also the way that they are applied by the state. These rights are applied to protect the person from infringement by others and by the state. Consider what Lebel commented about these rights and their relation to the 1792 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*: Mounier built upon and reconstructed the rights established in that initial Declaration.<sup>89</sup>

To merely build upon a previous liberal schedule of rights does not necessarily make Mounier's schedule of rights liberal, yet the reality that these rights imply does suggest that the schedule as a whole sustains a quasi-liberal polity. For example, article 8 establishes a robust protection for the person and her private life:

“La vie privée et le domicile sont inviolables. Tout homme a le droit d'aller, de rester, de partir, sans pouvoir être arrêté ni détenu que selon les formes fixées par la loi. Aucune visite domiciliaire ne peut avoir lieu qu'en vertu d'une loi ou d'un ordre émané d'une autorité publique, et pour la personne et l'objet expressément désignés dans l'acte qui ordonne la visite. L'ingérence des organismes publics dans la vie privée doit être réduite au minimum nécessaire.”<sup>90</sup>

This clearly sets up a reality that defends persons from infractions against their personal spheres, i.e., their private lives and their homes.<sup>91</sup> Despite the communitarian and relational nature of the person, she is also singular, which means that her being requires protection just as much as her relationality requires supports. This protection derives from the state's juridical order that is animated when an infringement occurs.

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<sup>89</sup> Lebel, 157.

<sup>90</sup> Mounier, *Les certitudes*, 100.

<sup>91</sup> This particular article, although it is not in the purview of this project to comment thoroughly on this matter, could be used to justify queer rights. Its phrasing is reminiscent of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's line to Canadian media in 1967 during the debates around the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Trudeau was a scholar of Mounier, so it is not entirely ungermane to ponder whether his line was influenced by article 8 of Mounier's schedule of rights.

Mounier is clear that the state is both negative and positive.<sup>92</sup> Prior to setting out the positive aspect of the state, i.e., the need for the state to create space and supports for the person to flourish singularly and relationally, he outlined the state's negative role of establishing barriers to impede others and institutions from harming the person. This third characteristic of liberal thought is evident in *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*, in *De la propriété capitaliste à la propriété humaine*, and in *Le personnalisme*.<sup>93</sup> A liberal state has the role of arbitrating or adjudicating disputes between persons. This is the negative role assigned to the state in Mounier's works: "L'État doit essentiellement rester un législateur, un arbitre, et un protecteur des personnes contre les communautés intermédiaires, ainsi d'ailleurs qu'un protecteur de ces communautés organiques contre l'anarchie individuelle."<sup>94</sup> Thus, the state can adjudicate disputes because it has been granted laws to uphold by the parliament.

This final aspect of Mounierian liberalism is quite important to note. Many remark that Mounier is an anti-parliamentarian.<sup>95</sup> There is, however, a nuance between his rejection of the parliamentary politics of the Third French Republic—and even the crisis prone Fourth French Republic—and his brief and underdefined endorsement of what resembles a form of a liberal parliament. Mounier's critique of parliamentarianism was linked directly to the lived reality of the 1930s. The final decade of the interbellum period saw French politics breaking down with heightened tensions between the Left and the Right. Mounier rejected the instability of French parliamentarianism. This instability, according to Mounier, stemmed from the propensity in liberal democracies for parties and politics to promote special interests over the common good.<sup>96</sup> To instill

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<sup>92</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 616.

<sup>93</sup> Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 129.

<sup>94</sup> Mounier, *De la propriété*, 475.

<sup>95</sup> Roy Pierce, *Contemporary French Political Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 51.

<sup>96</sup> Mounier, *Manifeste*, 622.

stability into the *cit  personnaliste*, Mounier wanted a form of direct democracy to balance the parliamentary aspect. The direct democracy aspect would be via referenda. Mounier’s parliament and referenda appear quite liberal on the surface, and the selection of who belongs to the parliament is liberal insofar as they are elected according to the principle of universal suffrage. But those who seek public office are called to this role rather than freely choosing it. On this topic, Roy Pierce comments, “The people should select and control their representatives, but they should leave the actual business of governing to specialists and avoid the dictatorship of the local caf .”<sup>97</sup> This conforms to the corporatist view of the polity: each person has a particular function. Despite this illiberal veneer, there is still a liberal element. Pierce continues, “There is in Mounier’s approach to democracy a sort of dialogue between Locke and Rousseau. On the one hand, there is the representative principle which assumes a pattern of vigorous group life that both sustains and limits the decision-making process of the governors. On the other hand, there is the nostalgia for an impossible small community and the recommendation of the federalist substitute.”<sup>98</sup> Mounier always favoured a ‘both-and’ formulation of ideas. Ultimately, for Mounier, this point of formulating a parliament like this is “to make it possible for variegated social forces to transmit their impulses into politics without producing either tyranny or anarchy.”<sup>99</sup> In the personalist democracy, it comes down to balance.

## **Conclusion**

The intent of this chapter was to show how the *nous* affects politics. We showed that Mounier sought a communal body politic that recognises the role of the relational in the person’s

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<sup>97</sup> Pierce, 61-62.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

life. Each person has a role to play in her *nous* and in the *cit  personnaliste*. The paradigm of the *cit  personnaliste* is communal, corporatist, and a hybrid liberal-republican democratic order.

Mounier was quite critical of liberalism. But we have taken pains to distinguish liberalism from individualism. As Juan Manuel Burgos commented, Mounier found no redeeming qualities in individualism.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, his model of personalist democracy had as a goal the protection of the freedom of particular persons from the domination of any level of government or sector of society. We argued that the personalist conception of democracy is dialogical and a hybrid of liberal and republican conceptions of democracy with some very important liberal qualities. This polity ensures the ability to exercise fundamental rights and encourages active participation in politics by each person and each community.

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<sup>100</sup> Burgos, 77.

## Conclusion

« La personne de l'homme est placée, ontologiquement et historiquement, dans une certaine situation qui fait partie de sa définition même, aussi bien que ses virtualités dernières. Des mœurs, une politique et par-delà une anthropologie personnalistes ne sont déterminables qu'en fonction de cette situation, hors de laquelle nous quittons le réel, et, avec lui l'efficacité. »  
Emmanuel Mounier, *Personnalisme et christianisme*<sup>1</sup>

“Individualism does not make us more free, more equal, more fraternal. The mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family. Nor can it save us from the many ills that are now increasingly globalized. Radical individualism is a virus that is extremely difficult to eliminate, for it is clever. It makes us believe that everything consists in giving free rein to our own ambitions, as if by pursuing ever greater ambitions and creating safety nets we would somehow be serving the common good.”  
Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this thesis, we have sought to analyse how the person found in Mounier's œuvre, whose essence is communitarian, can operate in a quasi-liberal polity. Our efforts have focussed on an elucidation of Mounier's ontological claims that define the person as a singular and relational being who has unique meaning within a community and a polity which endows the person with singular and communal rights. This elucidation contributes to the scholarship on Mounier because our insistence on the liberal elements in Mounier's thought stands in contrast to a large swath of the scholarship on Mounier that asserts that Mounier's work is radically communitarian. Even though the liberal elements we have identified in Mounier's work circumvent many excessively atomistic tendencies of individualist liberalism, we find at the heart of Mounier's description of the person an

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Personnalisme et christianisme*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 768.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2020), 48.

attention to her unique ability to define her life, her values, to make choices to maximise her freedom, and to defend her singular and communal existence thanks to a suite of rights guaranteed in a declaration of rights.

We demonstrated that these liberal elements are essential to understand the person found in Mounier's œuvre. These liberal elements have been easy to overlook given how often Mounier attacked 'liberalism' and 'liberals,' However, as we noted, what Mounier was denouncing under the label 'liberalism' was a radically atomistic and individualistic capitalism. But despite Mounier's constant inveighing against 'liberalism,' we find numerous elements of his political thought that we might fairly term 'liberal.' The economic rights outlined in his declaration, for example, are consistent with a form of liberalism not based on absolute property rights of autonomous individuals. Rather, his liberalism values for the individual the freedom to form associations and communities whilst endowing the individual with responsibility to others. In this liberalism, the communal is important for the self.

The question now turns to evaluating our efforts in meeting our hypothesis and the limitations stemming therefrom. This will demonstrate the potential timeless relevance of personalism that can then be applied to contemporary concerns.

At the outset, we stated that our hypothesis was that Mounier's  *cité personnaliste*  reconciles liberalism and communitarianism in a distinctive synthesis that celebrates the person's communal nature all the while securing her singular, that is, individual, rights. As such, our hypothesis led us to consider first the definition of the person before we could turn to the  *cité personnaliste*  and the person's place therewithin.

The person in Mounier's works is inherently communitarian because she requires a foundational relationship with others to gain an understanding of herself and her place in the world. The focus given to the relationship between the person and the other shines light on Mounier's rejection of atomistic selfhood as one that leads to an alienated existence.<sup>3</sup> This focus on the relationship with the other and on the person's communitarian essence does not undermine Mounier's insistence upon each person being a unique being. This means that even though the person is rooted in a particular circumstance,<sup>4</sup> each person maintains a unique identity in the relationship with the other and within the polity that Mounier imagined.

This became clear when we considered how Mounier wanted the polity—the *cit  personnaliste*—to function. Central to the *cit  personnaliste* is a guarantee of certain rights that Mounier enumerated in the immediate postbellum period. These rights, which include the right to equal treatment, the right to free movement, the right to privacy, the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the right to free assembly and expression,<sup>5</sup> indicate a desire to encode core liberal ideas in the *cit  personnaliste*. Mounier sought clear protections for the singular person. In fact, Mounier wanted to improve liberal rights by securing a person's communal rights. Mounier believed that it is incoherent to protect and to valorise a person without securing her foundational communal impulses. The communal rights envisaged by Mounier improve traditional liberal rights by codifying protections for the groups that contributed to each person's circumstance.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France—Quadrige, 2016), 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Les certitudes difficiles*, in *Œuvres, tome iv* (Paris:  ditions du Seuil, 1951), 99-104. The whole declaration can be found in the appendix.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

The communal rights present in Mounier's declaration of rights contribute to the articulation of a liberal *cit  personnaliste*. One of Mounier's goals was to guard against atomisation. A means to avoid the proliferation of atomism was to enumerate rights that correspond to the communal nature of the person and of the *cit  personnaliste*. For Mounier, recognition of communal rights in a (quasi-)liberal polity is essential for the person's flourishing.

Any articulation of a reformed liberalism will need to seriously consider the inclusion of communal rights. We can turn to Mounier for guidance in this regard. In fact, the communal rights outlined by Mounier fortify the singular person's rights, as Mounierian communal rights protect the person's communal foundations.

If we have established convincingly that Mounier's personalism has at its core a number of important liberal elements, we must conclude by acknowledging that there are still a number of important areas where further work would be needed in order to fully flesh-out a personalist politics. Our work touches on a core question in the debate between individualists and communitarians: when should a community's interests take precedence over an individual's desires? In chapter three, we sought to briefly address this question when we considered the rights enumerated in Mounier's *D claration des droits des personnes et des communaut s*.<sup>7</sup> Remember, we argued that Mounier's declaration would protect the right of Muslim women to wear, if they so choose, a hijab. We used this example, as the wearing of hijab can be considered a visible sign of a communal religious practice to which the wider community might object. However, a dedicated analysis is required to properly answer the question of which level, that is, the person or the

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<sup>7</sup> Mounier, *Certitudes*, 99-104.

community, has precedence in any given conflict. This is due in part to the abstract ways in which Mounier wrote, as he evaded precision on when the community's interests might precede those of the person. However, there are some instances where Mounier was more explicit, such as in relation to economic activity favouring the whole community instead of just a few persons. For other considerations, he was less precise, but we should not despair because the personalist outlook equips us with solutions to resolve conflicts in a more fruitful manner than traditional liberal theory. One such example might be in regard to Indigenous hunting rights in Canada.<sup>8</sup> Liberal theory would not want to carve out specific protections for Indigenous hunters to hunt out of season because liberal theory, generally, does not consider particularity in resolving conflicts. Personalism would provide protections for Indigenous hunters to hunt year-round, for their activities would fall under sections 27 and 29 of the *Déclaration des droits des personnes et des communautés*, which protect “natural communities” as well as “ethnic communities.”<sup>9</sup> A personalist court would need to take these sections into account. This example is also relevant when we consider the way that power and authority are exercised in the *cité personaliste*.

It is true that Mounier's account of the state and its diffusion of authority and power appears liberal. The division of powers is quite reminiscent of Montesquieu, which grants it an appearance of liberal genealogy. However, it remains ambiguous how and when political authority can be used legitimately in the *cité personaliste*. It is good to find in Mounier a concession that a parliament<sup>10</sup> is necessary and that authority and power can be

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<sup>8</sup> We are thinking specifically about *R v. Desautels* and the Supreme Court of Canada's decision to affirm the constitutionality of an American-born Indigenous person, member of a tribe whose territory extends into Canada, has the right to hunt out of season, as protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Cf. *R v. Desautels*, <http://www.decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/18836/index.do>.

<sup>9</sup> Mounier, *Certitudes*, 102-03.

<sup>10</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personalisme*, in *Œuvres, tome i* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1961), 626.

coercive,<sup>11</sup> yet the limitation resulting from his works is a lack of clarity on how power and authority can be exercised.

For us to truly capture the liberal elements, we require a further examination of how Mounier sought to institutionalise the exercise of power and authority. Mounier's concern for protecting the person from coercion, that is, power, has created limits to the ends we can draw out of his work when we attempt to find relevance in Mounier's thought because he has a particular understanding of authority and power for which a proper analysis would require more space than is permitted for this project.

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At the beginning of this thesis, we quoted from Paul Ricœur's address to the Association des amis d'Emmanuel Mounier in which he declared, "meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne."<sup>12</sup> Ricœur was not incorrect to praise the concept of the person over the philosophy of personalism: Mounierian personalism is a rich philosophical current, but it is full of contradictions and lacks explanation of important details.<sup>13</sup> In this thesis, we attempted to explain the contradictions in Mounier's work and offer more insight to important details. Having demonstrated that the person can indeed operate well in a quasi-liberal polity, we can expand our research to continue our efforts to draw out the relevance of Mounier's work, especially in an era, as we noted in the introduction, in which ideas emanating from quasi-religious sources often fall on deaf ears.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 623.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne," *Esprit* (1983), 113.

<sup>13</sup> Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, translated by RT Allen (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2018), 85.

The research that we began with this project demonstrates that Mounier's thought can assist in numerous endeavours, such as reframing liberalism to be attentive to the care of others. The demonstration of liberal elements in Mounier's personalism opens the doors to more detailed research in direct relation to the institutions that Mounier would have sought to create in the *cit  personnaliste*. This also has bearing on current debates around post-liberal thought, of both right- and left-wing varieties. In addition, there are implications for Mounier's thought in numerous fields of political thought, varying from bioethics to queer theory to artificial intelligence and algorithms. These topics are beyond the scope of this project but worth mentioning as potential avenues of research that can draw on what we have argued in this thesis. The reconciliation of communitarian and liberal ideas in the personalist outlook is an asset as we embark upon new avenues of research.

## Appendix

### *Déclaration des droits des personnes et des communautés<sup>1</sup>*

Les États sous-signataires reconnaissent l'autorités sur les individus et sur les sociétés d'un certain nombre de droits attachés à l'existence de la communauté humaine, ne dérivant ni de l'individu ni de l'État, ayant une double racine :

1° Le bien des personnes ;

2° La vie et le développement normal de celles-ci au sein des communautés naturelles où elles sont placées : familles, nations, groupements géographiques ou linguistiques, communautés de travail, groupements d'affinités ou de croyances.

Le but de toute société est la mise en œuvre des meilleurs moyens pour élever chacun au libre choix, à l'action responsable, à la communauté consentie.

La fonction propre de l'État est d'aider activement à la fois l'indépendance des personnes et la vie des communautés : la première, contre la tyrannie toujours menaçante des groupes ; la seconde, contre l'anarchie toujours renaissante des individus. Un organisme indépendant des États est habilité pour juger des abus du pouvoir d'État et dénouer souverainement les conflits qu'ils entraînent. Il définit les crimes d'État.

#### I. DROITS DES PERSONNES

1. La responsabilité personnelle, effective ou supposée, est le fondement des droits des personnes. Ces droits sont l'intégrité de la personne physique et morale, la liberté sous ses diverses formes, l'association, le travail, le loisir, la sécurité, l'égalité devant la loi.
2. Les hommes, inégaux par leurs talents ou leurs fonctions, sont tous égaux, quelles que soient leurs capacités, leur race, leur classe ou leur sexe, devant ces droits fondamentaux. Aucune loi d'exception ne peut être promulguée en fonction d'un de ces facteurs.
3. Tout homme a droit à l'intégrité physique et morale de sa personne. En dehors des mesures prévues par le Droit pénal, il ne peut lui être imposé ni violences systémiques, ni traitements dégradants, ni mutilations motivées par sa non-intégrité physique ou mentale, ni aucune forme de pression sur la volonté, fût-ce au de l'intérêt supérieur de la société.
4. Tout homme a droit à la santé, aux mesures préventives et curative d'hygiène et de médecine qu'elle nécessite.

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Mounier, *Les certitudes difficiles*, in *Œuvres, tome iv* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1951), 99-104.

5. En réciprocité, l'individu est comptable à la communauté de la force qu'il représente. Nul n'a le droit de se mutiler ni de se donner la mort, si ce n'est dans un intérêt supérieur au sien propre.
6. L'intégrité spirituelle de la personne ne peut être compromise par des méthodes de suggestion ou de propagande, émanant soit de l'État, soit de puissances privées, quand ces méthodes sont susceptibles d'exercer une pression inadmissible sur les volontés individuelles et quand les individus sont privés devant elles de moyens efficaces de défense.
7. Les hommes sont libres de leurs mouvements, de leurs paroles, de leurs écrits ou de leurs actes, dans la mesure où ceux-ci ne violent pas la présente Déclaration ou les lois promulguées en harmonie avec elle. La liberté sous ses diverses formes doit servir la dignité personnelle de chacun et le bien de tous. Elle est inaliénable et engage la responsabilité de chacun.
8. La vie privée et le domicile sont inviolables. Tout homme a le droit d'aller, de rester, de partir, sans pouvoir être arrêté ni détenu que selon les formes fixées par la loi. Aucune visite domiciliaire ne peut avoir lieu qu'en vertu d'une loi ou d'un ordre émané d'une autorité publique, et pour la personne et l'objet expressément désignés dans l'acte qui ordonne la visite. L'ingérence des organismes publics dans la vie privée doit être réduite au minimum nécessaire.
9. Nul ne peut être poursuivi en justice, accusé, arrêté ni détenu, que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formules qu'elle a prescrites. Nul ne peut être détenu plus de huit jours sans comparution devant un juge appelé à statuer sur la légalité de cette arrestation. Tout autre acte exercé contre un particulier ou contre une collectivité est arbitraire et nul. La victime de tels actes est habilitée à en demander réparation devant les tribunaux, et les responsables doivent en être punis.
10. Tout homme est présumé innocent jusqu'à ce qu'il ait été déclaré coupable. Toute rigueur qui ne serait pas nécessaire pour s'assurer de sa personne doit être sévèrement réprimée par la loi. Nul ne doit être puni qu'en vertu d'une loi établie antérieurement au délit. Nul ne peut être puni deux fois pour le même délit. L'effet rétroactif et l'effet cumulatif donnés à la loi sont des crimes d'État.
11. Les peines doivent être proportionnées au délit, exemplaires, et, autant qu'il se pourra, rééducatrices du coupable.
12. Tout homme est libre de parler, d'écrire, d'imprimer et de publier pensées, opinions et informations, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi, en conformité notamment de l'article 6.
13. Nul ne peut être inquiété pour l'expression de ses opinions ou croyances en matière religieuse ou philosophique, dans la mesure où elle ne heurte pas les droits garantis par la présente Déclaration.
14. La liberté d'enseignement découle des deux articles précédents. Elle s'exerce sous réserve des garanties de compétence, de moralité, de formation civique déterminées

- par la loi et contrôlées par l'État. Elle ne peut être limitée que par des institutions qui en garantissent l'esprit alors même qu'elles en restreignent l'exercice. L'enseignement élémentaire est obligatoire. L'accession aux formes supérieures d'enseignement est réglée sur le mérite.
15. Les citoyens d'un même État ont le droit, sur son territoire, de s'assembler librement, sans armes, sans uniformes non autorisés, en satisfaisant aux lois de police et en conformité avec l'article 6. Cet article est notamment applicable aux campagnes de réunions non contradictoires et aux défilés massifs.
  16. Les citoyens d'un même État ont le droit, sur son territoire, de s'associer pour l'étude, le développement et la défense de leurs intérêts communs selon les combinaisons qu'ils préfèrent. Ces associations peuvent être autorisées à recevoir comme simples adhérents des étrangers résidant sur le territoire national de leur ressort. Les associations internationales ne menaçant pas la structure de l'État sont autorisées. Toute coalition susceptible de mettre en danger les garanties de l'article 6 peut être interdite.
  17. Tout homme a droit au travail, c'est-à-dire a droit de recevoir un emploi garanti, avec une juste rémunération de son travail, en quantité et en qualité. L'État est garant de ce droit.
  18. Le travail n'est pas une marchandise, il ne peut être traité comme telle. Tout travailleur a droit au minimum de ressources nécessaire pour le faire vivre, lui et sa famille, d'une vie digne d'un homme.
  19. Le travailleur est libre d'adhérer au syndicat de son choix ou de n'adhérer à aucun. Il a droit à la détermination collective des conditions de travail, à la protection professionnelle, au respect de sa qualification, à la formation technique et sociale nécessaire pour l'associer étroitement aux fonctions de direction et de gestion dans le monde de travail.
  20. Tout homme a droit au loisir nécessaire pour se détendre physiquement et se former spirituellement selon son libre choix.
  21. Tout homme a droit à la sécurité. Infirmes ou incurables, il a droit à une fonction sociale compatible avec sa capacité diminuée. Si celle-ci est absolue, il est à la charge de la collectivité, lui et ses enfants mineurs.
  22. La loi doit être égale pour tous, soit qu'elle récompense ou qu'elle punisse, soit qu'elle protège ou qu'elle réprime.
  23. Tous sont admissibles à toutes les places, emplois et fonctions publiques, sans autre distinction que celle des capacités et de la valeur morale.
  24. Toutes les contributions sont réparties entre tous, selon les moyens de chacun et de manière à ne pas atteindre dans les biens qui lui sont indispensables la vie personnelle et familiale. Décidées par les seuls besoins de l'utilité générale, elles sont soumises au contrôle public.

25. La femme ne peut être traitée d'aucune façon en personne mineure. La loi lui garantit un statut de dignité équivalent à celui de l'homme dans sa vie publique et dans sa vie privée. La capacité civile de la femme mariée peut être modifiée par les régimes matrimoniaux dans la mesure nécessaire à l'administration des biens propres et communs.
26. L'enfant est protégé par une législation sociale dans son développement organique, intellectuel et moral.

## II. DROITS DES COMMUNAUTÉS

27. Il existe des communautés naturelles. Nées en dehors de l'État, elles ne peuvent lui être asservies ni identifiées. Leurs pouvoirs spontanés limitent le pouvoir de l'État. Elles doivent être représentées en tant que telles auprès de l'État.
28. La première de ces communautés est la famille. L'État la protège comme tout et dans chacun de ses membres. Il doit être tenu compte des charges de famille dans la rémunération du travail et l'établissement des prestations publiques.
29. La nation possède un droit absolu à l'indépendance de sa culture, de sa langue, de sa vie spirituelle, mais non à la souveraineté politique inconditionnée. Elle doit protéger, dans les limites de sa cohésion, les communautés régionales, ethniques, linguistiques ou religieuses groupées dans son sein.
30. Les communautés économiques et les communautés de travail sont fondées sur le service rendu, non sur le privilège acquis ou la puissance d'argent. Elles ne servent pas essentiellement le profit, la production ou la puissance de l'État, mais les besoins d'une libre consommation dans des conditions respectant la dignité du travailleur et le développement de l'esprit entreprise.
31. Le pouvoir économique ne peut appartenir qu'aux travailleurs de toutes natures. Le profit économique doit rémunérer les travailleurs selon les exigences des articles 18 et 19, avant de dédommager le capital irresponsable.
32. La hiérarchie des fonctions doit être assurée de telle sorte qu'elle ne donne pas lieu à une séparation de classes.
33. La communauté d'hommes est usufruitière de l'ensemble des richesses de l'univers. Toute nation a le droit, dans une organisation générale, d'en recevoir sa juste part. Tout travailleur a le droit d'émigrer, dans la mesure des possibilités, là où sa subsistance peut être meilleure ou son travail plus profond.
34. Tout homme a droit de propriété personnelle sur l'espace vital nécessaire à la personne humaine pour se constituer un milieu de liberté et d'autonomie, sous réserve que cette position ne soit ni un moyen d'oppression, ni un moyen de spoliation du fruit légitime du travail d'autrui.
35. Tout homme a le droit de transmettre à ses enfants le bien de famille défini dans ces limites. Ces limites sont celles mêmes du droit d'héritage.

36. Tuteur du bien public, l'État doit veiller à ces garanties. Il peut requérir contre les personnes ou les collectivités dont les possessions violent les clauses de l'article 33 ou menacent son autorité. Il peut prononcer l'expropriation par nécessité publique ou par déchéance du propriétaire; dans le premier cas, cette expropriation doit être l'objet d'une juste et préalable indemnité.
37. Il existe une communauté internationale naturelle, communauté de peuples et de nations dont la traduction juridique est une société d'États. Elle implique la communauté interraciale. La fédération librement organisée est le mode normal d'union des membres de la communauté internationale.

### III. DROITS DE L'ÉTAT

38. L'État est un pouvoir commis à la garde du bien commun politique, à la défense extérieure d'une nation ou d'un groupe de nations, à la coordination des activités individuelles et collectives de son ressort géographique.
39. Le pouvoir de l'État est limité par les pouvoirs spontanés des sociétés naturelles définies au titre II. Il est soumis à l'autorité suprême de la Déclaration, notamment à l'égard des libertés fondamentales. Il doit être réglé par une constitution et par l'organisation d'un contrôle constitutionnel.
40. L'assentiment de la nation à l'autorité de l'État doit être assuré par une représentation sincère, intégrale et efficace des opinions, des situations et des intérêts. Le vote à tous les suffrages publics est obligatoire et garanti contre toute pression de l'État ou des particuliers.
41. Une séparation des divers pouvoirs de l'État est nécessaire à son bon fonctionnement et à la garantie des droits. Elle doit comporter notamment l'autonomie du pouvoir juridique qui, par son recrutement et par ses structures, doit rester une expression vivante de la nation.
42. Une force de police est nécessaire au fonctionnement de l'État. Elle ne doit ni créer un corps autonome au sein de l'État, ni pénétrer dans d'autres domaines que ceux qui sont du strict ressort de l'État.
43. Il y a oppression quand est violée par l'État une des prescriptions de la Déclaration. Une Cour suprême, où des magistrats inamovibles se mêleront aux délégués de toutes les élites vivantes de la nation, est chargée d'arbitrer toute application et toute délimitation de la Constitution.

*This declaration of rights was published in Esprit in May 1945. We have taken this wording from Les certitudes difficiles found in Œuvres, tome iv.*

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