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LOUIS ROUGIER: A PERSPECTIVE ON HIS THOUGHT

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SUMMARY

Rougier's writings encompass a wide range of themes and a number of disciplines – intellectual, cultural and religious history, epistemology and logic, social and political analysis. The thesis is concerned predominantly with ideological aspects of his thought.

Much of Rougier's early philosophical work is concerned to expose the logical fallacies implicit in the traditional rationalism that lies behind much classical and medieval philosophy, fallacies which had dangerous implications, both for politics and the progress of knowledge. In contrast to rationalism's abstract and universalistic view of humanity, Rougier emphasized the plasticity of the human mind and the differences between cultures and individuals.

Rougier wrote extensively on religious history, notably on early Christianity and Greco-Roman paganism. Like Ernest Renan, who was a major influence on his thought, he saw religion as a crucially important cultural phenomenon. Though associated with the Vienna Circle, Rougier rejected the behavioristic and physicalistic tendencies of the logical positivist movement. His roots in French conventionalism (which had much in common with logical positivism, but was more sympathetic to religion) are emphasized. A debt to a tradition of idealism in linguistic and cultural thought is also noted.

Rougier was a key figure in the development of European neo-liberalism. In his later years he was involved with the Nouvelle Droite (generally perceived as a radical conservative movement). His social, political and cultural views are complex and nuanced and defy easy summary. They combine elements of conservatism with a belief in social and scientific progress. Rougier was consistently opposed to all forms of totalitarianism, consistently committed to the view that natural elites should be allowed to form and flourish, and a consistent advocate of the values of science and the cultural heritage of the West.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



Mark English

October 2003

Preface

This work is a record of my attempt to understand the thought and the underlying motivation of a unique and uniquely neglected figure in the intellectual history of the 20th century. It would be extremely difficult to identify a thinker of equivalent substance and scope who has been as universally ignored as Louis Rougier.

Rougier was quite out of step with the dominant intellectual and ideological fashions. In a political world which was often polarized and impatient of the individual voice, he sought to maintain fine distinctions. In an academic world which rewarded a narrow focus, his writings ranged over disparate areas. In an intellectual world which rewarded obscurity and novelty, he was devoted to the ideal of clarity and the values of science.

Without doubt a thinker worthy of serious attention, Rougier may be seen, however, to disappoint in certain ways. The prominence that the Catholic Church holds in his thinking (despite the fact that he was not a believer) is rather curious, and some of his mid-century works are marked by a somewhat idealized vision of France and its role in the world. Indeed, Rougier's forthright commitment to certain European cultural traditions and values may be seen to be associated with discredited cultural and racial views. His conservatism battles throughout his life with a strong positivistic streak, and there is no real resolution to this tension.

Questions of why Rougier was so out of step with his French philosophical colleagues and why he has been so ignored are not my main focus. Though plausible hypotheses are easy to frame, I suspect that definitive answers would be impossible to achieve. The whole question of historical explanation is a contentious one, and, indeed, explanatory hypotheses in history are all too often little more than invitations to indulge in scholarly virtuosity.

The goal of this work, then, is quite simply to elucidate aspects of Rougier's thought, especially those which relate to fundamental attitudes, or ideology (broadly interpreted). It should be noted that Rougier's social philosophy is closely bound up with his (strangely ambiguous) attitudes to religion.

My approach is expository, critical and comparative. My method has been to select from Rougier's oeuvre works and passages that appear to me particularly revealing of his general outlook and the ideological foundations of his thinking, to summarize the basic ideas, and, where appropriate, to comment, compare and analyze. I have also devoted considerable space to presenting the views of thinkers on whom Rougier drew (or may have drawn) or with whom he was associated. Such comparisons have been useful – indeed necessary – not only for putting Rougier in context, but also for understanding Rougier's themes and preoccupations, which can be puzzling to readers who are unaware of the cultural and intellectual environment in which he operated.

I am aware that my approach is unorthodox from a philosophical point of view. It conforms neither to an analytical nor to a 'continental' philosophical approach. Decisions concerning which works and passages of Rougier to treat in detail were not based on their philosophical importance, but rather on their relevance to the themes I have chosen to highlight. A study of the full range of his thought would be a daunting task, and one which I am not attempting here.

Whilst not totally ignoring other aspects of his work, I have tended to focus on Rougier's writings on religious and intellectual history and on social themes. But even within these limits I have had to be selective. For example, in respect of religious and intellectual history, I have dealt in some detail with Rougier's works on the Pythagorean tradition, on the late pagan philosopher, Celsus, and on scholasticism whilst largely ignoring his writings on early Christianity. The range of material covered is more than sufficient, however, to demonstrate the general direction and tenor of his thinking.

The present work is a response to Rougier's published writings. No attempt has been made to do archival research.¹ I look forward to the appearance of a good biography, and I am sure it would hold some surprises and illuminate some obscurities, but I am confident that the figure who emerges from my encounter with a relatively limited set of documents is soundly based in reality. I have at the very least brought to light some important aspects of the thought of a multi-faceted man who played a significant and largely unacknowledged role in the intellectual and political life of twentieth century Europe.

I wish to thank Karen Green for her comments on earlier drafts, and for her interest and encouragement. Others graciously answered my queries and provided useful information, amongst them Alain de Benoist (who was a close associate of Rougier's in the latter stages of Rougier's life), Wallace Kirsop, Mathieu Marion and Nicholas Rescher.

¹ Rougier's personal papers are held at the Château de Lourmarin in Provence. As I understand it (I have been unable to visit the archive) there are no significant unpublished manuscripts there, other than a work deriving from an obscure controversy with Léon Brunschvicg (Rougier had accused him of scholarly fraud). Mathieu Marion (personal communication) notes that the archive includes a large corpus of letters. The Rougier-Neurath correspondence, largely concerned with the affairs and activities of the Vienna Circle, comprises 700 pages.

Introduction: Louis Rougier and 'the anxiety of thought'.

Louis Rougier was born in Lyon in 1889, the son of a doctor. His education was somewhat unusual. Poor health interrupted his schooling, and caused him to fall behind in his work. As a student at the Lycée Ampère in Lyon, convinced he was destined to fail his baccalaureate, he devoted himself to a regime of self-directed reading, attempting, as he put it, to answer a series of questions which had occurred to him in the course of his long illness (Allais 1990, pp. 43-44). This unorthodox education no doubt contributed to Rougier's unique perspective, and may have contributed to his tendency to put a very high – some would say, excessively high – value on rationality, and also to a certain naiveté in respect of some aspects of social and political life.

Rougier went on to attend the Universities of Lyon and Paris, completing his *Agrégation de Philosophie* in 1914 and his doctorate in 1920. He taught at various *lycées* during the Great War, and accepted a position at the Ecole Chateaubriand in Rome in 1921. In 1924, he took up his first university position at Besançon, where he taught until 1939. During this period, he also taught at the University of Cairo (1934-36), the Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva and the Fondation Edouard-Herriot in Lyon.

He presided over a number of conferences in the 1930s. Perhaps the most important was the first International Congress of Scientific Philosophy which was held in Paris in 1935. This gathering arguably launched logical positivism as a truly international movement. Rougier was the only significant French academic philosopher of his generation to be associated with the Vienna Circle.¹

During the decade before World War II, Rougier was also a prominent figure in the European neo-liberal movement, a group of (mainly German-speaking) thinkers who sought to develop a new form of liberalism to counter totalitarianism.

In the early part of World War II, he was involved with the Vichy regime, and undertook a secret mission to London where he met Churchill. In early 1941, he went to New York, spending the remaining war years in North America. When he finally returned to France, he found himself a marginalized figure. Due to his association with Vichy, he was banned from university teaching until his rehabilitation in 1955, when he was appointed to a philosophy of science post at Caen.

After his retirement from teaching, Rougier remained intellectually and politically active almost until his death in 1982 at the age of 93.

In terms of publications, he was very prolific. The main subject areas with which he was concerned were epistemology and science, intellectual history, religious history, logic and language, and topics relating to social, economic and political issues. Like Bertrand Russell, whom he greatly admired, he was an indefatigable journalist and polemicist, though his politics diverged in significant respects from those of the English philosopher.

Rougier's polemical concerns are sometimes evident even in his most scholarly writings. This can be frustrating, but at least it makes for lively reading, and, more importantly, gives clues regarding the author's basic intellectual motivations. One has the feeling that a set of deeply-held convictions is driving Rougier in all his intellectual work, and from time to time these subterranean currents surface.

Rougier was, perhaps before all else, an advocate for scientific modes of thinking, for the practical benefits such thinking might bring, certainly, but also for less tangible reasons. He believed, like Henri Poincaré, who inspired much of his early work, in the intrinsic value of the quest for knowledge, and he recognized that it required a measure of moral courage to pursue the unsettling course of empirical research and rational thought. Early Greek scientific thinkers exemplified this ideal, whereas the early Christians, with their otherworldly vision of eternal bliss, disparaged thought and research. The Christians preferred, said Rougier (1974, p. 36), simplicity and resignation to the disquietude that comes with thought and the will to attempt difficult things. The Greek tradition of free speculation and abstract reasoning was eclipsed by the superstitions of neo-Platonism and the rise of Christianity before re-emerging in the Renaissance out of the matrix of scholastic philosophy.

If dogmatic religion was the main threat to such intellectual values in the Middle Ages, forces associated with commercialism may be seen to have been the chief threat in the 20th century. In an article published in 1930, Rougier expresses his belief that humanity can be more than just a particularly successful animal species, but only if it is not seduced by the fatal attractions of material comfort and superficial entertainment.

Le pire destin menacerait l'humanité si elle perdait, dans la béatitude du confort, l'anxiété de la pensée... (Rougier 1930, p. 920)

[The worst fate would threaten humanity if it lost, in the bliss of comfort, the anxiety of thought.]²

Rougier's ideals, however, derived from his extensive studies of the Western intellectual tradition, are complex and resist easy formulation. He accepts, in fact at times he seem to revel in, the complexities and paradoxes of history, and his own position is often difficult to discern.

The views and ideological commitments which do emerge will alienate many. They diverge especially from the dominant humanities culture in academic and intellectual circles. This may well be the chief reason for his neglect, but it is no justification. In fact, Rougier's almost total invisibility in the scholarly canon does raise potentially disturbing questions about the extent to which ideology has determined that canon.

Rougier was a thinker who was profoundly concerned with cultural, social and political issues. He was a participant in the tradition of social philosophers discussed by Robert Nisbet (1974) (though – predictably – he is not mentioned by Nisbet) which runs from Plato through to the 18th century *philosophes* and the 19th century revival of Enlightenment thought represented by such figures as Taine and Renan. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, writing at the end of the 19th century, emphasizes the highly political nature of French philosophy:

[P]hilosophic thought in France for the past two centuries bears almost altogether, though indirectly, upon the French Revolution. In the eighteenth century it is preparing and announcing it; in the nineteenth it is trying in part to check and in part to deduce the consequences of it. (Lévy-Bruhl 1924, p. vii)

Rougier conforms perfectly to this pattern, as much of his work is concerned, explicitly or implicitly, with analyzing and criticizing the principles of the Revolution.

For example, Rougier's major doctoral dissertation, published as *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a), on the face of it a scholarly and tediously extensive examination of ancient and medieval philosophical doctrines, is a profoundly political work. Indeed, in the preface, he explicitly justifies it in terms of its political pertinence, arguing that certain old doctrines have a habit of reappearing in new guises, and that a rejected doctrine can regulate our actions even when it has ceased to govern our minds (Rougier 1920a, p. XII). He is

particularly concerned to combat certain rationalist myths which had been incorporated into the social structures and assumptions of post-Revolutionary France.

Even his work in logic, the philosophy of mathematics and science is significant not so much in itself, but as a source of evidence adduced for more general conclusions. Rougier was not an original thinker in scientific and technical areas, and though he wrote at some length on science, mathematics and modern logic, the work tends to be merely expository where it is not brought to bear on broader social and metaphysical themes. In particular, he emphasizes the conventional nature of mathematical and logical systems, and the limited though significant scope of scientific thinking, themes associated with a sometimes explicit relativism, and metaphysical agnosticism.

Rougier's conclusions in the areas of philosophy of mathematics and logic serve to reinforce more general convictions related to the non-existence of *a priori* truths. Throughout his life he repeated similarly structured arguments against the kind of rationalism that appeals to absolute or innate truth, and in so doing appealed to the results of science, mathematics (non-Euclidean geometries, etc.) and modern logic.

Largely as a result of his early understanding and acceptance of Poincaré's views, he identified problems with Russell's early work which Russell himself eventually recognized (though not through Rougier's influence). I am thinking in particular of Russell's Platonism in relation to geometry, and attempts to make logic and set theory absolute.

As Ray Monk points out,

... the question of the truth of Euclid's axioms was not an empirical question as Russell had claimed, but rather a *non*-question. Somewhat in the manner of the later Wittgenstein, Poincaré held that the truth of mathematical propositions – in this case the axioms of Euclid – did not arise. (1996, p. 124)

So, by absorbing Poincaré early, Rougier to some extent prefigured at least by 1920 both the later Russell and the later Wittgenstein!

There are indeed parallels between Rougier and Wittgenstein. Rougier even used the phrase 'family resemblance' in relation to categorization at least as early as 1921, well before the appearance of Wittgenstein's famous analysis (Rougier 1921b, p. x).³ Both Rougier and

Wittgenstein were opposed to scientific reductionism and were interested in and respectful of religion as a mode of life. Both hovered on the fringes of the Vienna Circle, and shared a similar view of language and meaning. But they differed profoundly in their respective attitudes to science and scientific progress (Rougier positive, Wittgenstein negative).

Rougier retained an interest in science, mathematics and the technical side of philosophy, but, if I am correct, the ideological dimension is the crucial one. In order to understand the wellsprings of his thought, it is necessary to go beyond the confines of philosophy, and to take account of various intellectual currents. One writer in particular helped to form Rougier's views on religious, cultural and social matters: Ernest Renan.

Renan was a religious skeptic who combined a powerful belief in science with cultural and political conservatism. With Taine, another crucial influence, Renan played an important part in the revival in France of Enlightenment values. Many aspects of Rougier's thought are firmly rooted in this 19th century Enlightenment-revival. Certainly, much that might appear odd or curious to a modern reader seems less so when one is aware of the preoccupations of the writers who helped form the mind of a lonely provincial adolescent.

Though it is not a central concern of the present work, a few remarks on the question of Rougier's intellectual isolation in France would not be out of place. In claiming that Rougier might be almost unique in the French philosophical context in his association with logical empiricism, I am not in any way claiming that there was not a continuous positivist tradition in France, nor that he was the only French thinker associated with the Vienna Circle or logical empiricism. French 20th century positivists, however, tended not to be academic philosophers. For reasons I will not explore (some no doubt 'political' in the broad sense and concerned with educational power structures and educational bureaucracy), logical empiricism was not popular in French philosophical circles. Broadly empiricist or positivist attitudes were, on the other hand, quite common in other parts of the French intellectual community. French scientific culture remained very strong, and many French scientists, mathematicians, social scientists and freelance intellectuals articulated the positivistic philosophy which drove them. P. Lecomte du Nouy⁴, Marcel Boll, Jean Piaget and Emile Benveniste were notable for their readiness to articulate positivistic themes; Jacques Monod stands out amongst later 20th century figures. George Boas notes in an article on French philosophy that what remained of positivism in 20th century France was merely 'a technique of investigation' (Boas 1967, p. 247). And, I would

add, a passionate and articulate commitment to such techniques on the part of many practitioners of the sciences (broadly defined).

Empirically-minded mid-century thinkers tended to the view that French philosophy was in a state at best of stagnation, at worst of severe crisis and decline. Rougier himself felt that the only strength of French philosophy in the 1930s was in the history of philosophy (see Allais 1990, p. 46). In *La métaphysique et le langage* (1960), he cites with approval the views of M.H. Freudenthal and L.B. Geiger. Freudenthal, a logician, sees a dividing of the ways between two sorts of philosopher: those who have learned from modern logic not to build metaphysical structures on the basis of contingent grammatical features of natural languages, such as the copulative verb 'to be', and those who have failed to learn this lesson (Rougier 1960, pp. 231 ff.). The former are presented as taking the way of science, the latter are characterized – no doubt disparagingly – as 'men of letters'. Clearly, most French philosophers of the time were in the latter camp. Rougier makes the point that scientific thought progresses over time and achieves levels of convergence not evident in metaphysical philosophy. He cites L.B. Geiger on the failure of philosophers to reach any form of agreement:

'... il n'est pas de force au monde qui puisse contraindre les philosophes à tendre vers l'unité plutôt que d'affirmer à tout prix la valeur exclusive de leur propre point de vue.'
(Rougier 1960, pp. 235-236)

['No force in the world could induce philosophers to seek consensus instead of affirming at all costs the exclusive value of their own point of view.']

Another empirically-minded French thinker of this period is Claude Lévi-Strauss, who felt so constrained and frustrated within the context of the discipline for which he had been trained – philosophy – that he abandoned it altogether.

Of course, the acceptance of a broadly logical empiricist or positivist outlook leads to a lower status for philosophy: philosophy as underlabourer or handmaiden to the sciences. The French logical empiricist tradition could be seen to have responded to the challenge of the new ideas in a more radical way than its Anglo-American counterpart: philosophy as a discipline in its own right is not merely downgraded, it becomes irrelevant and unnecessary.

This radical response is hardly open to Rougier, however. Indeed, there is a question about whether he can justifiably be called a 'logical empiricist' at all. I will be arguing that, despite

his familiarity with some 20th century developments in science, mathematics and logic, his position may be understood largely in terms of earlier traditions. Though he devoted his life to exposing the contradictions and inadequacies of classical rationalism, Rougier's thought is impregnated with elements of that tradition. And though he was extremely dismissive of religious dogmas, he retained a keen interest in the phenomenon of religion. Many of his intellectual associates, even those who were seen as being anti-religious, were driven by religious imperatives. Franz Cumont, for instance, revealed himself in old age to be a devout Platonist. Rougier admitted to no such commitment. His persona remained resolutely impersonal, and resolutely skeptical. And yet some of the basic moves of his thinking – his early unequivocal rejection of behaviourism, his commitment to spiritual privacy, indeed his very interest in religion – seem to suggest that he was marked by religious perspectives.

The breadth of Rougier's intellectual concerns and the nature and complexity of his commitments and affiliations have contributed to his neglect by intellectual historians. What attention he has received has generally been narrowly focused on very specific aspects of his thought and activity. I have referred to – and sometimes drawn on – the few good critical articles (or parts of books) on Rougier which I have been able to discover.

There are very few entries for Rougier in general or philosophical encyclopedias: of these, the solid and respectful article by Robert Blanché in Edwards' *Encyclopedia of philosophy* (1967) is the most significant, and it is somewhat surprising that it alone did not lead to a wider interest in Rougier.

There are numerous references in historical works to Rougier's role as secret Vichy emissary to London in 1940, but this episode is only peripherally relevant to my themes. Jeffrey Mehlman's book on French émigré intellectuals in New York (2000) devotes a chapter to 'Louis Rougier and the "Pétain-Churchill Agreement"'.

Rougier's work as historian of religious ideas has attracted some attention. For example, his work on the Pythagoreans was recognized by Burkert (1972) and Culiuanu (1983). Assessments of their judgements of Rougier's contribution are incorporated into my discussion of Rougier's writings on this topic.

Some writers have dealt with aspects of Rougier's social thought. There is one good though hostile article by Gilles Bounoure (1987) on his role in the rise of the so-called French New Right (Nouvelle Droite). Bounoure's views are dealt with in my discussion of Rougier's social

philosophy. In the year following the centenary of his birth two relevant works were published: a booklet incorporating a rather uncritical assessment of Rougier's political and social ideas by Maurice Allais; and a work – Sunic (1990) – which deals, like Bounoure's article (but from a sympathetic perspective), with Rougier's role in the development of European radical conservatism.⁵ Mehlman (2000) – referred to above – emphasizes Rougier's humanitarianism during the War years; and his contribution to the revival of liberalism in the 1930s has recently been discussed by François Denord (2001). (See Chapters 14 and 11 respectively.)

Lately Rougier has begun to receive some attention from analytic philosophers in North America and Europe, particularly in relation to his role in the history of logical positivism. Mathieu Marion is playing a pioneering role in this respect (Marion 2003).

The first part of what follows deals with Rougier's early philosophical work, essentially with the work inspired by Poincaré. Part Two is concerned with Rougier as historian of religion, specifically with his book on Celsus and his work on the astral religion of the Pythagoreans. Part Three reviews his attitudes to science and religion, and Part Four is devoted to his social philosophy. It will be evident that the abiding themes and motifs of his historical analyses and general philosophical work find a place in the social philosophy. Nonetheless, no system emerges, and Rougier never sought to build one. What does emerge, I think, is something contingent and precarious, a complex tapestry of thought, responsive to various traditions and many influences.

Rougier was acutely aware of the contingency of history. And yet he remained committed to the possibility of human progress based on self-discipline and the core values of scientific reason. For Rougier, as for Renan before him, such progress is neither easy nor guaranteed. His entire oeuvre might be seen as a call to reject the paradisaical myth in all its forms, and to cherish the awkward and uncomfortable gift of intellect – the anxiety of thought.

¹ André Lalande [1867-1964] had some dealings with the group but he represented an earlier generation than Rougier, a generation which was in general more favorably disposed towards positivism.

² All the translations in square brackets are mine.

³ Rougier's use of the phrase 'air de famille' in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a) would appear to be more literal and therefore narrower than Wittgenstein's. There it is used in the context of biological species; but in Rougier (1921b) the context seems to be much generalized. In any case, it is quite clear that Wittgenstein's and Rougier's views on categorization are very similar.

⁴ Lecomte du Nouy was a biologist who, with Rougier, Lalande and Boll, was actively associated with the Vienna Circle in the 1930s.

⁵ During the last 30 years, various of Rougier's earlier works have been republished by organizations associated with the Nouvelle Droite. A number of these books incorporate scholarly introductions by Alain de Benoist.

PART ONE: PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1

Early philosophical views

In the course of an address at a function celebrating his ninetieth birthday, Louis Rougier recalled two books which, read in early adolescence, marked his entire existence: Henri Poincaré's *La science et l'hypothèse* and Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (Allais 1990, p. 44). Poincaré and Renan may be seen to symbolize two sides to Rougier's intellectual activity. Poincaré's conventionalism had a profound influence on Rougier's work in the philosophies of science, logic and mathematics. Renan, on the other hand, sparked his interest in the history of religions, and influenced his social and aesthetic thought.

This work is largely concerned with Rougier in his Renanian mode. However, Rougier the follower of Poincaré, Rougier the practitioner of 'scientific philosophy' cannot be ignored. As has been noted already, one element of his epistemological work – namely his rejection of classical rationalism – is crucial to an understanding of his general and social philosophy. Consequently, an attempt will be made to outline those themes of his purely philosophical work which seem most relevant to an understanding of his general outlook and of his social philosophy.¹

Rougier believed in a scientific philosophy, a philosophy squarely based on new developments in the physical sciences, mathematics and logic. For too long philosophy, in the grip of classical rationalism, had been preoccupied by pseudo-problems (as Rougier characterized them at least as early as 1919², pre-empting the similar critiques of the Vienna Circle).

At this time, the Bergsonians were conducting their own assault on rationalist ideas, but Rougier was keen to distance himself from what he saw as their anti-intellectualism, their appeal to intuition. His own position he terms 'intellectualist', using a term Poincaré had used in *La valeur de la science*³. Three basic tenets or principles may be discerned in Rougier's 'intellectualism' as it is described in the preface to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, p. VII).

Firstly, it is implicitly committed to putting a higher value on the activities and pleasures of the mind than on the pleasures of the emotions and the senses. (Specifically, Rougier criticizes an exclusive pursuit of the latter.) This element of his thought links the scientific side of his thinking to other, broader aspects: it clearly has implications for ethics and, as we will see, also has political implications. It helps explain his notion of the anxiety of thought, and his warnings about the dangers of material or mystical comforts. It is also relevant to his rejection of the values of literary Romanticism (elaborated, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, in his book on Celsus), and to his classical and conservative aesthetic.

Poincaré's views on this principle should be noted. Like Renan (the other crucial influence on Rougier in this matter⁴), Poincaré insisted on the intrinsic value of intellectual and artistic striving. He touches on this issue explicitly in *La valeur de la science*, where he affirms that not all pleasures are of the same quality. The goal of civilization is not 'to furnish alcohol to people who love to drink' (Poincaré 1946, p. 355).

In his introduction to an edition of *La valeur de la science* published in 1947, Rougier characterized Poincaré's convictions regarding the human and aesthetic value of science as Platonic.

Poincaré soutient, contre Tolstoï et les pragmatistes, 'la science pour la science', tout comme 'l'art pour l'art', car il voit dans la science et dans l'art le couronnement de notre activité et 'ce par quoi seules valent les civilisations'. La vie pour la vie n'est que tribulation et misère, si rien de supérieur au souci de notre confort matériel ne vient l'illuminer. Or, cette illumination ne peut être que le ravissement que procurent la quête de la vérité et la contemplation de la beauté. Toute action doit avoir un but. Nous acceptons de travailler, de souffrir, mais 'pour payer notre place au spectacle' et ce spectacle seul est digne de nos efforts. (Poincaré 1947, pp. 51-52)

[Poincaré supports, against Tolstoy and the pragmatists, the idea of 'science for the sake of science', like 'art for art's sake', because he sees in science and in art the crowning achievements of our activity and 'the only criteria by which civilizations may be judged worthy'. Life for life's sake is only tribulation and misery, if nothing superior to a concern for our material comfort comes to illuminate it. But this illumination can only be the ecstasy that the quest for truth and the contemplation of beauty brings. All action must have a goal. We accept the need to work and suffer,

but only 'to pay for our seat at the spectacle' and it is this spectacle alone which is worthy of our efforts.]

Endorsing Poincaré's intellectualist and Platonic ideal of the disinterested pursuit of truth and beauty, Rougier emphasizes its political implications. He cites several leftist writers of the 1930s and 40s and a Nazi Education Minister, all of whom reject "pure science" in favor of seeing science as social service, entirely driven by the practical needs of society as determined by the state. Totalitarian regimes, rejecting a distinction between "the temporal and the spiritual", do not recognize, as liberal societies do, a sacrosanct sphere of individual thought and action (Poincaré 1947, pp. 52-53).

The second principle of Rougier's intellectualist philosophy is closely related to the first: it is that action should always be subordinated to thought. Taken as a guide to individual action, it is in harmony with the liberal values which Rougier associated with the disinterested pursuit of truth. Taken as a social prescription, it may be seen however to justify – or even to necessitate – elitist social and political structures.

The third principle is that the scientific disciplines (interpreted broadly to include disciplines such as history) are the only reliable sources of knowledge. Philosophical, religious or mystical intuition do not constitute true sources of knowledge. There is no royal road to truth, and no special philosophical method. Both rationalism and Bergsonism advocate non-empirical epistemologies, whereas Rougier's intellectualism is tied closely to the values and methods of science.

Rougier sought to distinguish his position not only from the Bergsonians but also from the pragmatists. He rejects pragmatism on moral, aesthetic and logical grounds. An exclusive focus on success as a criterion of truth leads to amoralism, he notes (Rougier 1920a, p. VIII), and, in this respect, pragmatism represents a narrower view even than that of classical rationalism. Rougier contrasts the "narrow" view of the former with the metaphysical optimism of the rationalists, who

... se bornaient à prétendre que, en dépit des apparences, si l'on tient compte de l'ensemble des choses et si l'on prolonge l'existence humaine par la perspective d'une autre vie, tout s'arrangera bien finalement pour les bons. (Rougier 1920a, p. VIII)

[... conclude that, despite appearances, if one takes into account the whole picture, including the notion of another life, then all will eventually be well for the just.]

Rougier's sympathy and respect for the classical rationalists' attempt to see beyond immediate appearances brings to mind the subject of one of Rougier's later works, the astral religion of the Pythagoreans (Rougier 1959). In both cases, a beautiful intellectual system was constructed which, though ultimately proven to be false or flawed, exerted powerful moral influence and embodied a high valuation of the intellect.

Rougier's logical argument against the instrumentalist theory of truth associated with pragmatism and with 'l'Humanisme'⁵ (1920a, p. VIII) is due to Poincaré. The instrumental theory of truth sees science as having value only in terms of the help it provides as a regulator of action. But science is a useful guide for action only if it produces reliable predictions -- in which case it is not without value as a means of knowledge.

Like any serious thinker, Rougier tends to chart a complex, individual course, and his relations with other thinkers and position with respect to various traditions are often difficult to define precisely and unequivocally. For example, while he rejects the instrumentalism of Comtean positivism, and its tendency to undervalue the importance of religious and other traditions, he explicitly appeals to Comte's characterization of the progress of thought through various ages and stages in order to criticize Bergson's reversion from the metaphysical to the theological stage of thought (1920a, p. IX). And, again, his criticism of Bergson's philosophy is not all-encompassing: it is just the anti-intellectualism implicit in the appeal to intuition to which he takes exception. In so far as Bergsonism rejects metaphysical realism and the static worldview which derives from it, it is an admirable philosophy (Rougier 1920a, pp. VIII-IX). His attitude to the philosophy of William James shows a similar ambivalence. Though explicitly rejecting pragmatism, he draws heavily on James' critique of idealism (Rougier 1920a, pp. 458 ff.).

This tendency to embrace complexity, which could be seen as another dimension of Rougier's intellectualism, permeates all aspects of his thought. In the areas of social philosophy and politics, for example, Rougier deplored the dominance of the simplistic 'logic of the alternative', advocating the need to appreciate the ideological complexities of history.⁶

He even manages to discern deep truths in the book of Genesis. The story of the fall, of original sin, transposed into the language of modern science teaches us that we must battle against our instincts, which spring from an atavistic inheritance. The free deployment of our instincts is

incompatible with social existence. Virtue, civilization and morality are marks of the superior life of the mind, and require a kind of self-conquest. The dialectic of the rationalist myth, by contrast, affirming natural goodness, equality and imprescriptible rights, is more treacherous than the counsels of the serpent in the garden of Eden (Rougier 1920a, p. 41).

The problem is that the rationalists, defining humanity in terms of an ideal of reason, end up with a simplistic, unbalanced and unrealistic notion of mankind. Failing to grasp the complexities of human psychology and social life, they ignore the differences between individuals and peoples as well as the irrational motives which determine our feelings, opinions and beliefs. They also fail to see how prejudice and superstition have played an important role in the slow development of civilization.

L'histoire montre comment, parti de prémisses erronées, l'homme arrive à des conséquences justes; comment d'une théorie chimérique il tire des conséquences salutaires; comment la sottise se transforme en sagesse, comment du mal sort le bien. (Rougier 1920a, p. 47)

[History shows how, starting from erroneous premises, man reaches sound conclusions; how salutary consequences may be derived from a chimerical theory; how foolishness may transform itself into wisdom, how good may come from evil.]

Basically, rationalism is at odds with empirical reality, and so at odds with science. Its dubious metaphysics and pernicious utopias spring from its attempt to reconstruct the universe and society *a priori* and deductively (Rougier 1920a, p. 47). By contrast, Rougier's intellectualism is based on scientific principles, on the need to coordinate deductive and discursive thought with empirical factors.

Rougier's early work on logic and the philosophy of mathematics contributed significantly to the development of his general philosophical outlook. Though it is not possible to give a full account here of his more technical works, it is important at least to note their key themes.

Rougier was inspired to work in these areas by reading Poincaré, but he was influenced also by a number of other thinkers, notably Edmond Goblot, Peano, Russell and David Hilbert.

Goblot was the young Rougier's logic professor at Lyon. Rougier reacted positively to Goblot's scientific orientation, but rejected Goblot's view that reasoning is never independent of the objects which one is reasoning about (Rougier 1961b, pp. 11-12)⁷. Goblot, in effect, sought to abandon the purely deductive character of mathematical reasoning. Reasoning in geometry, for example, was seen to involve intuition – the mental execution of manually executable operations (such as rotations, deformations, etc.). But Rougier had read articles by Peano, Russell, Couturat and others on the new symbolic logic which took a very different line. According to these thinkers, form was independent of content and reasoning was purely deductive.

A view of mathematical reasoning as purely deductive or analytic leads, however, to a problem which Poincaré had raised in *La science et l'hypothèse*:

The very possibility of the science of mathematics seems an insoluble contradiction. If this science is deductive only in appearance, whence does it derive that perfect rigor no one dreams of doubting? If, on the contrary, all the propositions it enunciates can be deduced one from another by the rules of formal logic, why is mathematics not reduced to an immense tautology? [...] The contradiction will strike us more if we open any book on mathematics; on every page the author will announce his intention of generalizing some proposition already known. Does the mathematical method proceed from the particular to the general, and, if so, how then can it be called deductive? (Poincaré 1946, pp. 31-32)

Rougier set out to find a solution to this problem, and he found it in the work of David Hilbert. On holiday in Germany (sometime before World War I), Rougier had the good fortune, as he put it, to discover Hilbert's *Grundlagen der Geometrie* which sought to outline a complete system of axioms for Euclidean geometry (1961b, p. 13). Hilbert sought to exclude all recourse to intuition, so as to avoid introducing hidden postulates which would render the proofs circular. His formalization procedure involved stripping any intuitive signification from the most basic notions which were treated as non-defined symbols constrained only by the theory's axioms. This procedure left only a network of relations between symbols empty of content. The possibility of axiomatizing and formalizing a mathematical theory showed that Goblot was in error. Goblot's analysis relates only to an insufficiently axiomatized geometry, where appeals to intuition are needed to introduce – as necessary – the axioms that have not been made

explicit. Halsted's geometry – based on Hilbert's scheme – is an example of a geometry without figures, and constitutes a definitive response to Goblot (1961b, p. 14).

But what of the problem of the creative capacities of mathematical reasoning highlighted by Poincaré? Rougier claimed to have solved this problem by establishing that the axioms of any mathematical theory may be divided into three groups: axioms of existence, formative axioms and axioms of relation (1961b, pp. 14 ff.). (See also Rougier (1921a, pp. 53 ff.).)

Axioms of existence postulate the existence of mathematical objects (like points, straight lines and planes). In a formalized system, these objects are replaced by symbols in the manner of Hilbert. Instead of saying, 'Two distinct points determine a straight line', one says (replacing the points by small letters and the lines by capital letters), 'a and b determine A, if a is different from b'. These symbols are defined and characterized merely by their obligation to respect the relations enunciated by the axioms in the other two groups.

Formative axioms allow one to move from objects of which one has postulated the existence to the construction of new objects which are related in certain ways to the first objects. For example, in geometry, two points being given, one can create a unique straight line between these points; a straight line and a point outside of this line being given, one can create a plane. Or, in arithmetic, a whole number being given, one can form a new whole number – its successor – by adding one to this number, and so on indefinitely.

Axioms of relation state that, if certain relations exist between objects of which existence has been postulated, other relations exist also.

The creative activity of mathematics is due to the power of formative axioms. For example, starting from triangles, one can construct polygons and demonstrate their properties (of which those of triangles are a particular case). Likewise, one can form new relations from those postulated in the axioms, and the new objects and new relations can be connected with each other in such a fashion as to determine relations with new objects, and so on indefinitely.

So mathematics, without ceasing to be based on deduction, can generalize without limit. Proofs consist, not in combining axioms syllogistically, but in combining objects, of which one does not specify the nature, by applying to them the formative principles of the theory which play the role of operating rules.

In consequence, the truth of the theorems of a deductive theory is purely formal.

... [C]'est un schème logique, un barème de déductions toute faite, susceptibles de s'appliquer aux objets et aux relations particulières les plus variés. (Rougier 1921a, p. XV)

[A deductive theory is a logical schema, a ready-reckoner of completed deductions, able to be applied to the widest range of objects and specific relations.]

Based on objects characterized uniquely by the laws of their combination, one theory may admit several intuitive interpretations, and it is in this fact that its fecundity lies.

Rougier points out (1961b, pp. 16-17; see also 1921a, pp. XIV-XV) that, for rationalists and Kantians, axioms are *a priori* truths. For Riemann, on the other hand, they are hypotheses (thus the term hypothetico-deductive systems). For Poincaré, as we will see, they are conventions, more or less useful ('plus ou moins commodes'). The error of the rationalists consisted in taking the hypothetical as apodictic.

Rougier published his views on these matters in a series of articles in *La revue de métaphysique et morale* which appeared prior to 1920. The articles were later consolidated into his book *La structure des théories déductives: théorie nouvelle de la déduction* (1921a), dedicated (somewhat ironically) to Goblot. Designed as both polemic and pedagogical tool, the book – as Rougier later claimed – contrasted greatly with the philosophical texts of the time. He adds:

Le contraste avec le *Traité de Logique* de Goblot était flagrant. (Rougier 1961b, p. 17)

The work ends with an explicit recognition of its polemical purpose, which was to expose the weaknesses of the Kantian view of the status of mathematical axioms. The disastrous ('ruineuse') theory of mathematics which formed the basis of the criticist position arose as a result of a misunderstanding of the nature of Euclidean geometry. It was (as Rougier put it) the astonishing popularity of Kant's views amongst philosophers which had led to a regrettable divorce between philosophy and science (Rougier 1921a, p. 125). Rougier sees himself in this work, as in his other main works of the period, as helping to bring French philosophy into line with recent scientific developments.

Rougier's complementary doctoral thesis, *La philosophie géométrique de Henri Poincaré* (1920b), explored in detail the epistemological implications of non-Euclidean geometries, drawing on articles by Poincaré on the principles of geometry published between 1886 and 1912. Rougier argued, following Poincaré, that the very existence of non-Euclidean geometries showed that the axioms of ordinary geometry could not (all) be necessary truths, for, if they were, then non-Euclidean geometries would be impossible. The neo-Kantian response to the development of Lobatchevskian and Riemannian geometries was to argue that the axioms of ordinary geometry were synthetic *a priori* judgements based on pure intuition of the nature of space, and that the other two systems could not be accompanied by any representation: only Euclidean space is intuitive. Non-Euclidean spaces are purely conceptual. But, as Rougier notes (1961b, p. 18), this neo-Kantian position was exposed as being unsound by various developments, including the work of Beltrami, who showed that non-Euclidean geometries had real applications, and Helmholtz, who showed that Lobatchevskian and Riemannian geometries could in fact be represented. Poincaré imagined universes in which the inhabitants, endowed with sense organs identical to ours, would spontaneously adopt a non-Euclidean geometry.

Indeed Poincaré's famous 'myth' of a Lobatchevskian universe could be seen as one of the primary motivating factors in the development of Rougier's thought. For Rougier had first encountered the 'myth' when he read *La science et l'hypothèse* as a young teenager, and it played such an important part in his early work in the philosophy of mathematics that he included an account of it both in his complementary (1920b, pp. 188-189) and in his principal doctoral thesis (1920a, pp. 282 ff.). Poincaré's speculative fantasy of a world within a sphere, a world perceived as infinite by the inhabitants, demonstrated the relativity and, indeed, the empirical origins of reputedly transcendent geometrical truths (Rougier 1920a, p. 283).

In his complementary thesis, Rougier points out that Poincaré had arrived at the basic notions of his philosophy of geometry quite early, in the wake of his use of non-Euclidean geometries in his researches into Fuchsian functions (1920b, pp. 117-118). An article published in 1887 – which Rougier quotes at length (1920b, pp. 118-119) – already encapsulates the basic notion that the fundamental axioms of geometry are neither empirical, nor synthetic *a priori* truths (as the Kantians believed); nor are they analytic truths (as Leibniz and Taine believed), but rather *conventions*.

Rougier then cites (1920b, p. 119) a subsequent article – first published in 1891, and reprinted in *La science et l'hypothèse* – in which Poincaré elaborates on this notion: geometrical axioms are conventions, and our choice amongst all possible conventions is *guided* by the facts of

experience, but not constrained by them. Our choice remains free, and is constrained only by the necessity to avoid contradiction. It is not hard to see how encountering this notion in Poincaré's book, fleshed out as it is by fantastical though scientifically constrained speculations, might have fired the imagination of the 14 year-old Rougier, and set him on an intellectual course from which he did not deviate. What had been lost was the false security of the illusory apodictic truths of the classical rationalists and Kantians; what had been gained was a new appreciation of the creative powers of the human mind.

Rougier does not uncritically accept all of Poincaré's ideas. He speaks of the need to temper some of Poincaré's assertions (1920b, p. 120). Specifically, he distances himself from certain of Poincaré's Platonic assumptions:

La raison qu'invoque Poincaré pour établir que la notion de groupe ne dérive pas de l'expérience, mais préexiste en puissance dans notre esprit, semble, du reste, contestable... (Rougier 1920b, p. 203)

[The "reason" which Poincaré invokes to establish that the notion of the group does not derive from experience, but preexists in a potential form in our minds, seems nevertheless questionable...]

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Rougier embraces Poincaré's basic views on geometry and on science generally. One particularly astute call (in the light of Gödel's subsequent work) is his endorsement of Poincaré's criticisms of Hilbert's suggestion that the non-contradiction of the axioms of a deductive science might be able to be directly proved (Rougier 1920b, p. 72).

But perhaps Poincaré's most enduring legacy to Rougier was that he showed that it was possible to embrace conventionalism without abandoning a high regard for science. Extreme or radical conventionalism tends to lead to relativism and is often associated with attempts to undermine the authority of science and to defend a religious worldview. Edouard Le Roy and Pierre Duhem (in their different ways) sought to do this, as did some of the Polish conventionalists of the mid-20th century. They may be seen to have been following the example of Cardinal Bellarmino and a long list of Catholic apologists.

But Poincaré had explicitly rejected an extreme form of conventionalism (specifically, Le Roy's) which saw facts as entirely theory-dependent.⁸ Whilst acknowledging, and even embracing, the truth of geometrical conventionalism, he was a strong defender of the authority

of science. In this, Poincaré may be seen as a precursor of the philosophers of the Vienna Circle. (Indeed, he was explicitly recognized as such in the Vienna Circle's 1929 manifesto.)

Rougier's moderate empiricism found its first extensive expression in his principal doctoral thesis, *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a). Rougier draws in this work on a huge variety of thinkers, and no attempt will be made to specify all of them. We have already noted, however, that, in outlining his 'intellectualism' in the preface, he drew heavily on Poincaré, and that he gave an account of Poincaré's scientific fantasies regarding non-Euclidean worlds in the body of the work. Rougier also drew heavily on William James, specifically on his critique of idealism (1920a, pp. 401-402; 458 ff.), and on his 'philosophy of experience'.

Like James, Rougier sought a solution to the antinomies of metaphysical philosophy in a return to the world of pure experience. He attacked the notion of sensations as 'disjoint atoms' without any relations between them, citing a French edition of a work by the American philosopher⁹:

"A examiner concrètement la vie sensible, déclare James, il est impossible de ne pas reconnaître que les relations de toute sorte: temps, espace, différence, ressemblance, changement, mesure, cause, etc., font partie intégrante du flux des sensations, tout autant que les sensations elle-mêmes; et pareillement impossible de ne pas voir que les relations conjonctives font partie de ce flux tout aussi réellement que les relations disjonctives." (Rougier 1920a, p. 406)

['Examining concretely the life of the senses', declares James, 'it is impossible not to recognize that relations of all sorts: time, space, difference, resemblance, change, measure, cause, etc., are an integral part of the flux of sensations, just as much as the sensations themselves; and likewise it is impossible not to see that conjunctive relations constitute as much a real part of this flux as disjunctive relations.']

The basic point here seems to be that sensations are embedded in a rich network of relations, and it is this network which constitutes reality. Rougier rejects the extremes of an absolute monistic idealism (e.g. Bradley's inaccessible and sterile Absolute) and 'le pluralisme intégral du réalisme' (e.g. Leibniz's monads), in favor of a 'pluralisme relatif'.¹⁰ He takes this position not so much on the basis of metaphysical argument, but rather on the basis of the fact that

science works. If everything in the universe were radically interdependent, or, again, if every element were radically independent, science would be impossible (Rougier 1920a, p. 406).

Science works, according to Rougier, because it allows us to identify functional and static invariants in the flux of sensations. The functional invariants become the 'laws of nature'; static invariants relate to certain abstract (volume, mass, energy) or concrete (electron, atom, molecule) scientific notions (Rougier 1920a, pp. 407-408). These ideas would be developed into the functional theory of knowledge elaborated in Rougier's *Traité de la connaissance* (1955), but any detailed discussion of Rougier's philosophy of science remains beyond the scope of the present work.

Les paralogismes du rationalisme sets out to refute classical rationalism on a much broader front than the two works already discussed. Its orientation is historical and critical, rather than systematic. Aldous Huxley, one of the few major figures to have noticed it, called it a model of lucid analysis (1949, p. xviii). It is, however, a difficult book, largely because in it Rougier is operating – to use a phrase applied by Alan Montefiore to Rougier's later *Traité de la connaissance* – on 'a bewildering variety of levels' (Montefiore 1956, p. 160). The work does not fit neatly into any academic category, combining as it does the history of philosophy with scientific and mathematical and, indeed, social and political ideas.

Rougier defined classical rationalism, the principal target of his critique, as any philosophical doctrine which adhered to the following principles¹¹:

1. That, in addition to truths of fact, which are particular, *a posteriori* and contingent, there are universal, *a priori* and necessary truths.
2. That these truths are independent of our minds.
3. That these truths are independent of experience.
4. That these truths are applicable *a priori* to experience, though they are independent of it. One is able to deduce truths of fact from truths of reason, and consequently to know the world – at least the general laws of the universe – through thought alone.
5. That these truths are apprehended by a faculty which is *sui generis*, quite distinct from sense perception and discursive understanding. This faculty Plato calls *nous* as distinct from *dianoia*;

St. Augustine calls it *ratio superior* as distinct from *ratio inferior*; German philosophers call it *Vernunft* as distinct from *Verstand*; and classical rationalists call it reason or *bon sens*. Reason is one and the same in all places and at all times; it is present equally in all men, as it is the defining characteristic of humanity.

Disagreements arose, however, between various forms of rationalism on secondary questions, such as the domain of rational truths. There was much discussion towards the end of the 18th century, for instance, on whether the principles of mechanics were rational truths or truths obtained by empirical generalization. Another question related to the mode of grasping necessary truths. Was it reminiscence, intellectual intuition, or some other mode of experience?

For Rougier, rationalism encompassed many and varied philosophical traditions. In his retrospective summary of the leading ideas of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, he specifically mentions the following, amongst others: Platonism; Aristotelianism; Greek, Arab, Jewish, and Latin neo-Platonism; Thomism; Cartesianism; the philosophies of Leibniz, Kant and Hegel; Anglo-Saxon neo-Hegelianism; the views of Cantor; and Husserlian essentialism (1961b, p. 24).

Rougier attempted in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a) to identify and classify the logical errors upon which these different philosophical systems were built. The work incorporates critiques of all of the above-listed varieties of rationalism, except for Husserlian essentialism. (In fact, Husserl is not mentioned in the early work.)

In the first part of the book, which incorporates both historical exposition and critical analysis, Rougier proposed a number of basic paralogisms (or logical fallacies) on which, in his view, the belief in the existence of rational truths ultimately rests (1920a, p. 60). One such error consists in extracting a theorem from its context and seeing it as being true in itself, rather than merely hypothetically true, i.e. relative to a certain system of axioms. A second error leads to seeing the axioms as necessarily true, the necessity of the proof being seen to derive from the content of the axioms rather than from the formal laws of deduction. A third and closely related fallacy consists in inferring the empirical truth of a proposition from its formal truth, in contradiction to the principle of the independence of matter and form, according to which the validity of an argument is always independent of the subject-matter.

By Rougier's own account (1961b, p. 26), the most important section of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* is the analysis of the realism which is an essential element in the sort of

rationalism he is seeking to refute. This form of realism consists in believing that human thoughts correspond to some kind of independent reality, and that statements we make on the basis of these ideas correspond to independently-existing truths. Such truths are seen to exist, says Rougier (1961b, p. 26), in a transcendent realm of Platonic ideas; as innate ideas; or they may be seen to be immanent in nature, constituting the essence of things. Realism thus purports to provide a mode of knowledge which is totally independent of empirical experience.

Rougier's critique of realism, which constitutes the third and largest part of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, pp. 275-436), seeks not only to identify the logical errors which underlie realism, but also the psychological factors which may help account for its popularity. This emphasis on human psychology gives Rougier's account a modern feel, though, it must be said, Rougier's psychological observations remain, even in his later works, very much on the intuitive level. He shows no great interest in 20th century developments in experimental psychology (such as the work of Piaget).

The principle psychological illusions upon which realism is based are listed by Rougier as follows (1961b, pp. 26 ff.):

1. Because proper nouns designate real and unique individuals, there is a natural tendency to believe that all nouns do likewise, even terms designating a negation, like 'nothingness'. In his 'Itinéraire philosophique' (1961b, p. 26), Rougier quotes a contemporary of Alcuin who wrote a text on nothingness and darkness, treating the terms as designating substantial realities rather than merely the absence of all reality and all light respectively. As Rougier notes, the author in question was a precursor of Heidegger and Sartre.

2. The second psychological illusion relates to the fact that entities (like numbers, for instance) which are created by coherent conventions can seem to take on a life of their own, displaying unexpected properties. The entities are objectified on account of their strangeness. In reality, the properties of these entities can be explained in terms of the conventions which created them, but the link between the properties and the conventions is often far from obvious, requiring complex chains of reasoning for its elucidation. Rougier cites Malebranche and Descartes on the apparently objective and eternal properties of geometrical figures. But non-Euclidean geometries have proven that such properties result from the contingent choice of a set of axioms. Geometrical and other mathematical truths are merely truths of definition, and any life they may have derives entirely from the conventions of the language which gave them birth.

3. A third psychological illusion identified by Rougier relates to the fact that we have an overwhelmingly powerful tendency to accept as adequate for an understanding of reality the conceptual divisions which thought imposes on the continuum constituted by the totality of forces impinging on our senses. These conceptual divisions are rendered indispensable by the requirements of action, as Bergson and Le Roy have shown. They also underpin the linguistic conventions which make intersubjective communication possible (Rougier 1961b, p. 28). But this process has the disadvantage of isolating groups of sensations that we call objects, events and behaviors by detaching them from their contexts (without which, of course, they would not exist). Language designates these elements as if they existed by and of themselves in splendid isolation.

Rougier's original account (1920a, pp. 386 ff.) of the way the 'artifice' of language – necessary for structuring our thought and action – leads inexorably to realism is particularly lucid and concise. His description of the way the human infant progressively parcels up reality is characterized by similar concerns and preoccupations – with, for example, spacial displacement and the stability or otherwise of material forms – to those of Piaget and his collaborators.

Why did Rougier refer to his critique of realism as the most important part of the book? I think it is because he sees the realism implicit in classical rationalism as leading directly to certain ideological commitments which he made it his mission in life to expose as unsound, as based on illusion. Realism is the foundation of a belief in necessary truths, and this belief – 'une des plus prodigieuses aberrations de l'esprit de l'homme' – leads to a theological conception of the universe. Following Eddington, Rougier suggests that the footprints in the sand which we take to be the traces of a mysterious being are in fact our own (1961b, p. 30).

But this 'aberration of the human mind' leads not only to philosophical and theological errors. It also has direct implications for social and political thought. Take, for example, the third psychological illusion discussed above. The tendency to carve up the continuum in specific ways leads us, for example, to speak of man as a reality independent of his natural and social milieu, as if a man were able to exist apart from the earth which sustains him, the air that he breathes, the food he eats, and the other people with whom he lives in a symbiotic relationship (Rougier 1961b, p. 328). Thus one comes to think that the notion of man (or humanity) designates an unchangeable essence, a reality which exists independently of flesh and blood human beings. This notion leads to the naive political beliefs and prescriptions of the

Enlightenment (such as natural equality) which Rougier was keen to expose as illusory, insisting, as he did, on the diversity of humanity and the multiplicity and possible mentalities.

A final section of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, pp. 455-461) tries to show how distinct mental structures, leading to quite distinct modes of explanation, have existed, co-existed and competed with one another (like Kuhnian paradigms) over the centuries. The very existence of these radically different modes of explanation shows that reason is not to be understood as a simple, universal human faculty.

Whether one looks at explanations of natural or of cultural phenomena, a huge variety of modes of explanation is evident. Rougier lists various types of explanation for the existence of the world and the laws of nature, which he assigns to general categories: anthropomorphic, animist or theological; ontological or metaphysical; symbolic, magical or mystical; and positive or scientific (1920a, p. 446). (Plato's *Timaeus*, notes Rougier, incorporates elements of each of these explanatory categories.)

The phenomenon of religious myth has provoked very varied explanations. Rougier refers to Porphyry's decomposition of the divinities of ancient fable into a series of abstract symbols demonstrating the relationship between the body and soul, the world of the senses and the world of the spirit (1920a, p. 454). He contrasts this with the rationalistic explanations of the 18th century, and with Max Müller's linguistic explanations (Rougier 1920a, p. 455).

Different mentalities can also be associated with different individual psychologies or outlooks within a specific academic or scientific field. Scientific explanations exhibit great variety, and partake of different modes: figurative, abstract and deductive, mechanical, etc. (Rougier 1920a, p. 446).¹²

Until the 19th century, the belief in reason as a single, universal faculty reigned supreme – especially in France, where scholasticism had combined with social forces of the time of Louis XIV and Cartesianism to create a new and powerful classical spirit (Rougier 1920a, p. 33). Rougier makes the point that the substitution of Romanticism for classicism and the advent of positivism should have destroyed rationalism's authority. But, in fact

... [l]e Romantisme a simplement transformé le socialisme jacobin de Babeuf dans le socialisme sensible, humanitaire, évangélique et utopique de Pierre Leroux, de Louis Blanc, de George Sand. (Rougier 1920a, p. 40)

[... Romanticism simply transformed the Jacobinic socialism of Babeuf into the sensitive, humanitarian, evangelical and utopian socialism of Pierre Leroux, Louis Blanc, and George Sand.]

Nonetheless, the tide was turning, and the renewal of the historical sciences during the Romantic period marked a return to the individual and the concrete, and to a new appreciation of the diversity of races and peoples (Rougier 1920a, p. 455). This thread of Rougier's thought, drawing on Renan, Taine and Lévy-Bruhl¹³, complements his work on the philosophy of mathematics and logic deriving chiefly from Poincaré. Both modes of his thinking – the historical and the logico-mathematical – tend to support a pluralistic and, to some extent, relativistic worldview.

Rougier's rejection of reason as a special faculty – universal and unitary – providing special access to eternal truths is well supported by historical and anthropological evidence and also by the development of alternative logics. And his positive vision of reason is at least plausible, persuasively presented, and broadly compatible with a modern evolutionary perspective.

For Rougier, reason reveals itself in our capacity to use certain logical operations (association, disjunction, abstraction, etc.) to elaborate ideas, formulate judgements, and to develop chains of reasoning so that we might adapt ourselves more and more adequately to empirical reality.

Dans cette tentative, toujours poursuivie et sans cesse reprise, seules les méthodes scientifiques inspirées par le souci de la cohérence logique et l'esprit de soumission aux faits ont réussi. (Rougier 1961b, p. 33)

[In this constantly renewed and continuing process, only scientific methods inspired by a respect for logical coherence and a spirit of submission to the facts have succeeded.]

But, like reason itself, the scientific method is not given once and for all.

... [C]es méthodes elles-mêmes ont évolué. Elles se sont perfectionnées de manière à devenir de plus en plus puissantes, à mesure que l'esprit parvenait à s'élever à des niveaux de plus en plus élevés d'abstraction [...] Dans cette perspective, on peut donner le nom raison à l'activité synthétique de l'esprit qui, en coordonnant toutes

nos informations et nos réactions, nous permet de nous adapter d'une façon de plus en plus harmonieuse et efficace au milieu physique et social qui nous sert d'habitat. (Rougier 1961b, p. 33)

[The very methods have evolved. They have been perfected so as to become more powerful, to the extent that the mind is able to rise to higher and higher levels of abstraction. From this perspective, one can give the name "reason" to the synthetic activity of the mind which, in coordinating external inputs and our reactions, permits us to adapt ourselves more and more harmoniously and effectively to the physical and social milieu in which we live our lives.]

Implicit in this description is a belief in scientific or intellectual progress. But Rougier's notion of intellectual progress is not to be confused with the ultimately simplistic and one-dimensional notions of Comte and other 19th century positivists. Rougier's proposed new science of mental structures would have embraced the diversity and variety of cultures, and acknowledged the richness of this heritage. It would have celebrated the plasticity of the human mind and its ability to take delight in radically different types of explanation and intelligibility. Rougier envisaged it as an historical and positive (i.e. scientific) study of the architectonic development of the human spirit in different countries and in different epochs, utilizing the findings of a range of disciplines: anthropology, philology, the history of religion, and various sciences and branches of philosophy (Rougier 1961b, p. 34).

Though Rougier's notions could be seen to prefigure elements of Kuhnian philosophy of science and aspects of structuralist thought, no Rougierian science of mental structures has been forthcoming, and most today would be inclined to see the concept of such a science as fatally flawed. The project has the air of those grandiose schemes devised by the 19th century positivists, or by early 20th century thinkers (like Ernst Cassirer) who sought to deal scientifically with ideas (like Cassirer's "symbolic forms") which were too large, too unwieldy, too vague to form the basis of a truly scientific theory.

A particular problem, I think, relates to the way Rougier speaks of mental structures both as group phenomena and as individual phenomena. The relationship between the individual mentality of, say, a scientist or mathematician who favors a particular mode of explanation, and an historically conditioned tradition of thought needs to be made clearer.

Nonetheless, there is much in Rougier's vision which will strike a chord with current intellectual trends. His belief in the plasticity of the human intellect will be shared by many today. But Rougier did more than simply assert his belief in the plasticity of mind and the variety of explanation. He sought, through his writings on logic and religious and intellectual history, to substantiate his claims.

Rougier's critique of scholasticism draws both on his historical mode of thinking, and on his logical interests. Rougier envisaged this project as representing his major contribution to a science of mental structures. Others would provide comprehensive analyses of other self-contained worlds of reasoning and explanation, other mentalities.

¹ No attempt will be made to trace in detail the development of Rougier's philosophy of science. I focus on the early works. Virtually no reference will be made to his *Traité de la connaissance* (1955). It should be noted, however, that, as his tribute to Poincaré and Renan suggests, Rougier's views on basic philosophical issues altered little throughout his life.

² See Rougier (1919, pp. 1-2); see also Rougier (1920a, p. 397) and Rougier (1921a, pp. V-VI).

³ See Poincaré (1946, pp. 321 ff.).

⁴ Renan's views will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

⁵ I take Rougier to be referring here to the Comtean tradition.

⁶ See discussion of Rougier (1948) in Chapter 14.

⁷ My account of Rougier's early philosophy draws on this work, Rougier's own account of his 'philosophical itinerary', as well as on the original works.

⁸ See Chapter 6 in which this and other matters relating to the French conventionalist tradition are discussed.

⁹ *La philosophie de l'expérience*, p. 268. (I have been unable to trace the reference.)

¹⁰ James (1976, *passim* and p. 44) advocates what he terms a 'radical empiricism' and a 'radical pluralism'.

¹¹ As in my account of the two early works already discussed, I am drawing on Rougier's summary of the main themes of his early work in his 'Itinéraire philosophique' as well as on the original work. For his summary of the principles of classical rationalism, see Rougier (1961b, pp. 23 ff.).

¹² In *La valeur de la science*, Poincaré had emphasized the great variety of individual mathematical and scientific minds (1946, pp. 210 ff.).

¹³ Renan, according to Rougier, established how the Semitic mentality differed from the Aryan; Taine how the English mind differed from the French mind, and how the man of the Renaissance differed from the man of the Revolution. Rougier cites Lévy-Bruhl on the realization that the belief that the human mind is the same in all times and all places was unsustainable (1920a, p. 455). Taine influenced Lévy-Bruhl as well as Rougier and, at least indirectly, an important tradition of 20th century historical thought. In the introduction [1863] to his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, he outlined (in the words of Hans Aarsleff (1982, pp. 360-361)) 'a program for what has later been called *histoire totale* or *histoires des mentalités*'. Lévy-Bruhl, who was a generation older than Rougier, developed a pluralistic and relativistic sociology, and is most famous for his works on the "prelogical" or "mystical" mentality which is purportedly based in the concept of participation rather than causality. (A similar notion – resemblance – is evident in Foucault's study of the 16th century European "doctrine of signatures" in *The order of things*.)

Chapter 2

Rougier's critique of scholasticism

It seems that an association of sorts with a neo-Thomist academic in the early 1920s was a factor in Rougier's decision to write extensively on scholastic philosophy.

Une nomination à l'Ecole Chateaubriand, à Rome, m'avait mis en rapport avec des professeurs des Universités pontificales, en particulier avec un très remarquable dominicain, le Père Garrigou-Lagrange qui professait à l'*Angelico*. Il avait assimilé toute la *Somme théologique* et la *Somme contre les Gentils* qu'il citait de mémoire, et son esprit, fermé aux réalités extérieures, fonctionnait dans un univers de purs concepts comme celui d'un Docteur scolastique du XIII^e siècle. Je m'étais évertué, mais en vain, à lui faire admettre que la preuve de l'existence de Dieu par le mouvement n'avait aucun sens depuis la découverte du principe d'inertie par Galilée. Procédant uniquement par analyse de concepts, sans jamais se poser la question de leur rapport avec l'expérience, il objectait que l'idée du mouvement ne figurait pas dans la définition de la notion de corps. En conséquence, un corps ne pouvait être de lui-même qu'en état de repos. Etait-il en mouvement, il ne pouvait l'être que sous l'action d'un moteur distinct de lui conformément à la maxime de l'Ecole: *quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*. La notion de mouvement relatif, au surplus, lui échappait. (Rougier 1961b, p. 34)

[An appointment to the Ecole Chateaubriand in Rome put me into contact with academics attached to the pontifical universities, in particular with a very remarkable Dominican, Father Garrigou-Lagrange who taught at the Angelico. He had assimilated [Aquinas's] entire *Summa theologica* and the *Summa contra gentiles* which he cited from memory, and his mind, closed to exterior realities, functioned in a universe of pure concepts like that of a scholastic doctor of the 13th century. I had striven in vain to make him admit that the proof of the existence of God from movement had no meaning since the discovery of the principle of inertia by Galileo. Proceeding solely by an analysis of concepts, without ever considering the question of their relationship with experience, he countered that the idea of movement didn't figure in the definition of the notion of a body. Consequently, a body was only able of itself to be in a state of rest. If it was in motion, it was only able to be so under the

action of a force distinct from itself, in accordance with the scholastic maxim: *quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*. Moreover, he didn't grasp the notion of relative motion.]

Much of what Rougier has to say about scholasticism is polemical. At virtually all stages of his career he condemns scholastic modes of thinking as being incompatible with experience and with modern notions of logic and science. Nonetheless, he sometimes (notably in Rougier (1940)) seems to flirt with a radical relativism which seems at odds with talk of error and an implicit acceptance of the results of modern scientific and logical research as having definitively undermined earlier views. But his basic point is that the scholastics erred in believing that their work was based on necessary and universal truths; and such a judgement, though unequivocal and, as it were, 'absolute', is, paradoxically, quite consistent with relativism.¹

Rougier's polemical stand is evident in his characterization of scholasticism as having arisen from one of the most prodigious pseudo-problems ever to obsess the human mind: the attempt to reconcile reason and faith; reason being identified with the secular wisdom of the Greco-Roman philosophers (seen as a set of truths logically flowing from a small number of principles which are self-evident and common to all minds), and faith as the revealed truth of the Judeo-Christian (or Islamic) scriptures (Rougier 1966, p. 16).²

Two factors conspired to produce the illusion of a universal, self-evident reason. The first was a belief in the unity of classical philosophy brought about by the syncretistic efforts of the last schools of Alexandria and Athens (Rougier 1966, pp. 19-20). The second factor was the widespread acceptance of Aristotelian logic in diverse Mediterranean intellectual communities which led to the illusion that it was in fact a reflection of a universal logic which would lead to the elaboration of a *philosophia perennis* (Rougier 1966, pp. 22-23).

Rougier's approach is at times historical and at times synoptic.³ On the one hand, he treats scholasticism as an historical phenomenon; on the other, he takes a general and comprehensive view of scholasticism, seeing it as a unique and, in some sense, essentially timeless 'mentality'. This two-pronged approach reflects the two complementary aspects of his thought alluded to in the previous chapter.

Whereas the article 'La scolastique et la logique' (1935) is clearly synoptic, Rougier's *Histoire d'une faillite philosophique* (1966) is straightforwardly historical. It is worth summarizing the

story Rougier tells, for, though much of it is pretty standard intellectual history, this material may be seen to form the basis of many of his ideas on the scope of reason and the nature of intellectual progress.

Rougier sees Johannes Scotus Erigena as having inaugurated scholastic philosophy in the 9th century. Erigena's novel views were, however, not well received. His rational interpretation of Biblical symbolism was seen to be dangerous, and his neo-Platonic terminology left him vulnerable to the charge of pantheism (Rougier 1966, p. 55). It was not until the eleventh century that serious attempts were again made to provide rational justifications for religious dogma. The occasion for this renewal of scholastic philosophy was heresy. The eucharistic heresy of Béranger and the trinitarian heresy of Roscelin had to be combated. Lanfranc, prior of the Abbey of Bec, was forced to utilize dialectic in defense of Catholic dogma, though he would have preferred to restrict himself to the positive method of the old theologians of the patristic tradition (Rougier 1966, p. 60). Lanfranc's successor as prior of Bec, Anselm [1033-1109] was altogether more sympathetic to the use of dialectic, and, though he attacked various thinkers for presuming to derive the doctrines of the Church from reason alone, proceeded himself to do just this, not only in relation to the existence of God, but to his essential attributes, and to the doctrine of the trinity (Rougier 1966, p. 63). He even purported to prove by 'necessary reasons', and without reference to Christ, that without the incarnation salvation would be impossible. He gave arguments in his book *Cur deus homo* which were supposed to demonstrate, without reference to Christ, that nature had been instituted so that one day the whole man, body and soul, might enjoy immortal happiness. This was evident from the very fact of his having been created. But this outcome could only be realized by a man-god; and so all that faith teaches us on the subject of Christ must be so (Rougier 1966, p. 64). Though Anselm acknowledged that in cases of apparent conflict between reason and faith, reason must defer to faith because divine mysteries may transcend human wisdom, in practice his method was overwhelmingly rationalistic, leaving no significant role for faith.

The approach of Peter Abelard [1079-1142] was similar to Anselm's. He believed that some fundamental elements of Christian doctrine could be grasped by reason, and put forward the example of Plato who, without the aid of revelation, arrived at the notion of the trinity. Bernard of Clairvaux retorted that the lengths to which Abelard went to make Plato a Christian showed only that Abelard was a pagan. Though Abelard was accused of claiming that God could be entirely understood by human reason, he did not in fact go this far, allowing an important role for faith. He did, however, believe (like Anselm) that the doctrine of the trinity could be rationally demonstrated (Rougier 1966, p. 71).

A large part of the rationalism of Anselm and Abelard was abandoned by Hugh of Saint-Victor [1096-1141] who introduced a tripartite distinction into Christian dogmas (Rougier 1966, p. 77). Some teachings, like the existence of God and the unity of God are *ex ratione*: reason alone can demonstrate their truth. Some, like the trinity, are *secundum rationem*: they can be shown by reason to be possible, but they are only shown to be actually true by the scriptures. Others, like the incarnation, are *supra rationem*, beyond the scope of reason altogether; for these truths the sole source is scriptural revelation. Hugh clearly prefigures Aquinas who adopted a similar approach. However, the dangers of rationalism prompted a return to the old notions of positive theology.

The perceived problem with the rationalism of the dialecticians was that it tended to lead to heresy, and, even where it did not, that it tended to undermine the whole notion of revelation which becomes in a sense redundant. Faith was no longer necessary. This was clearly a dilemma for the Church, and it led to various kinds of reaction or response. Some, like Hugh and Aquinas, attempted to seek out a middle ground. But others were led to a complete rejection of reason *vis à vis* matters spiritual, to fideism. Rougier compares this attitude to that of the *simpliciores* of primitive Christianity. He quotes Peter Damian [11th century] who fulminates against philosophy, asserting that, far from being heavenly, it is earthly, animalistic and diabolical (1966, p. 81). The Popes who set up the University of Paris as the intellectual hub of Christianity believed that philosophy should be utterly subservient to theology. They were inspired by the famous formula: *Philosophia ancilla theologiae* (Rougier 1966, p. 82). Of course, philosophy was later to be seen, in the context of positivism, as the handmaid of science: strange how persistent medieval formulations can be.

But the return to a positive theology, based entirely on the authority of scripture and a small number of other authorities, including the *Organon* of Aristotle, was disrupted by the dissemination throughout the Christian West in the early years of the 13th century of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as well as other Aristotelian texts on physics and natural science (Rougier 1966, pp. 82, 87). The works of Aristotle were perceived as an authoritative encyclopedia, a compendium of all knowledge which the human mind was capable of discovering by its own resources, and so, inevitably, the doctors of the church set about attempting to reconcile this 'new' body of knowledge with revealed doctrines (Rougier 1966, pp. 87-88). Figures such as Albertus Magnus and, as indicated above, Thomas Aquinas charted a middle course, equidistant from the extreme rationalism of the dialecticians and the fideism of the *simpliciores*.

Rougier observes that Aristotle's metaphysics is marked by an overriding concern to avoid the monism of Parmenides. Parmenides had substantiated the verb 'to be' by putting an article in front of it, and he and his disciples derived from this grammatical form the consequence that being is the only thing that exists. Being is, non-being is not. Being, then, is the unique existent. This would involve a negation of all pluralism, diversity and becoming – values, incidentally, which Rougier has espoused in many of his works. Rougier notes that Aristotle was, like Parmenides, duped by the grammatical structure of the Greek language, specifically by the existence of articles by which verbs could be transformed into nominals. He succeeded in avoiding a Parmenidean monism only by developing an elaborate system of five theories which determined his ontology: his theory of categories, that of transcendentals, of potentiality and actuality, of matter and form, and of substance and accidents (Rougier 1966, p. 89).

The theory of categories consists in the denial that the notion of being is the supreme genus under which all the determinations which affect individuals are subsumed. There are, according to Aristotle, not one but ten irreducible genera or categories which represent the totality of predicates that can be asserted of a subject: substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, situation, manner of being, action and passion (Rougier 1966, p. 90).

The theory of transcendentals affirms that certain determinations (the notions of being, unity, true and good) are not subsumed under any of these categories, but are attributed to each of them analogically. Rougier quotes Aquinas to the effect that the error of Parmenides was to believe that being was univocal, like a genus; whereas in reality being is not a genus, being used of different beings in different senses (1966, pp. 90-91). But, Rougier notes, the analogicity of being is not sufficient to liberate it from the Parmenidean aporia (1966, p.91). To escape from the ruinous consequences of this ontological monism, Aristotle and, in turn, the scholastics insert between non-being and actual being an intermediate state of potentiality. This notion provided a convenient way out of the monistic position which, because it suppressed any distinction between the creator and his creatures, was associated with pantheism, the most feared heresy of the Middle Ages (Rougier 1966, pp. 96-97). Other parts of Aristotle's metaphysics and logic provided useful tools for the rational justification of dogma. For example, the distinction between substance and accidents was used to justify the mystery of eucharistic transubstantiation.

Despite the uses to which Aristotle was put by the Church, Aristotelianism remained in many respects incompatible with Christianity. Aristotle's God was quite alien to the Christian God,

and his cyclical notion of cosmic history was utterly incompatible with Biblical and Church teachings (Rougier 1966, p. 98). The first reaction of the Church authorities to the rediscovered works of Aristotle – to forbid their being read and discussed – was therefore understandable. But the attraction of these writings was irresistible, and, wisely, the Church authorities opted for a more conciliatory line.

Encouraged by Urban IV, Aquinas set out to make Aristotle compatible with Church doctrine. Specifically, he sought to Christianize Aristotle by interpreting the logical distinction made by the Greek philosopher between essence and existence as an ontological distinction. In created beings, he argued, there is a real, ontological distinction between essence and existence. So, for Aquinas, there are two possible sorts of beings: necessary beings whose essence logically implies existence, and contingent or created beings whose essence does not logically imply existence, but only a simple possibility of existence (Rougier 1966, p. 102). Furthermore, notes Rougier, the Thomist principle of the real distinction between essence and existence allows the fundamental dogmas of the incarnation and the trinity to be given an ontological signification, providing new arguments against the objections of heretics (1966, p. 104). The dogma of the incarnation implies the existence of two natures (divine and human) in one person. In scholastic thought, the notions of essence and existence were associated with those of nature and person in respect of rational beings. So, if one assumes the ontological identity of essence and existence, and consequently of nature and person, one is drawn to one or other of two christological heresies: the Nestorian notion of two natures and two persons in Christ; or, on the other hand, the heresy of Eutyches (Monophysitism) which holds that in Christ there is but one person and one nature (the divine) (Rougier 1966, p. 105).⁴ Similar considerations apply to the doctrine of the trinity: the Thomist principle appears to be the only way rationally to defend the received doctrine.

Rougier points out that Aristotelian principles also cause doctrinal problems in relation to angels. According to church doctrine, angels are pure spirits, that is, in terms of Aristotelian metaphysics, pure immaterial forms. But since, for Aristotle, existence derives from form (*Forma dat esse*), angels would exist eternally and necessarily and would thus be gods, which is of course against Christian doctrine. Aquinas, however, argues that the formula *Forma dat esse* should be understood as saying no more than that God grants existence to contingent beings by the intermediary of form. So angels can after all be both pure spirit and contingent. This argument, as so many of his arguments in defense of the dogmas of the church, relies on his notion of a real, ontological distinction between essence and existence in created things (Rougier 1966, pp. 106-107).

Rougier's position with respect to Aquinas and scholasticism in general is fairly clear. The common mentality which arose in Europe in the Middle Ages under the pervasive influence of Aristotle was characterized by its attempt to derive the structure of the real from an analysis of language, reasoning about concepts while ignoring the observable facts of experience, assuming that the world must conform to the conceptual divisions thrown up by discursive thought (Rougier 1966, p. 23). Rougier sees Aristotelian metaphysics, and the scholastic theology built upon its foundation, as having been definitively undermined by modern empiricist philosophy which grew out of the last great movement of scholastic philosophy, nominalism (1966, p. 24).

Rougier's narrative suggests that scholastic rationalism, having explored the logical possibilities implicit in its assumptions, had in a sense played itself out. There was a sense that a new framework was required. Key Thomistic conceptions were widely questioned, as something resembling a Kuhnian paradigm shift gathered momentum. As Rougier points out (1966, pp. 113 ff.), there are internal difficulties with Aquinas' doctrine, and contemporary thinkers saw this. For example, what is the reality of the essence in an actually existing being? How can a potentiality remain a potentiality when it is actualized?

The Averroists rejected Aquinas' real distinction between essence and existence and sought to return to Aristotle's system. This, of course, led to the same old problems of reconciling reason with revealed dogmas which a number of Averroists solved by the radical expedient of postulating two distinct orders of truth: truths of reason and truths of faith (Rougier 1966, p. 118). Aristotle's philosophy deals with the truths of reason, whereas the domain of faith is a supernatural realm where reason need not apply. God, being all-powerful, is not bound by reason. Besides, if reason can demonstrate the truths of religion, what merit would there be in believing (Rougier 1966, p. 119)?

The nominalists denied more than the real distinction between essence and existence – they rejected also the existence *in re* of abstract ideas, the realism of universals, entailing the abandonment of the whole Aristotelian and Thomistic ontology.

The greatest of the nominalists was William of Ockham [1300-1350]. He distinguished between intuitive knowledge and abstract knowledge. Intuitive knowledge relates to actually existing individual things which we designate by expressions like "this tree" or "this running man". Such terms Ockham calls terms of first intention (Rougier 1966, p. 133).

Abstract knowledge relates on the other hand to general notions and is subject to confusion. The concept of "man" is based simply on the fact of a general resemblance between certain creatures as opposed to others. Rougier writes that a universal (or general) concept is based on a vague and imprecise kind of resemblance, like a family resemblance (1966, p. 134). No one instance is exactly like another but each one brings the others to mind. Rougier used this family resemblance idea in the introduction to his early work on the new physics (1921b): it was clearly important for him. The fact that Wittgenstein's much later use of the concept attracted the attention it did suggests that philosophy is to a large extent blind to its own history. (Wittgenstein himself had little knowledge of the history of ideas.) Rougier presents the basic idea as due to William of Ockham, but he makes it his own by his use of a modern analogy, a reference to Galtonian pictures.

Un concept universel est comme ces images galtoniennes que l'on obtient en superposant les photographies de plusieurs membres d'une même famille et qui les rappellent tous, d'une façon floue et indéfinie, sans ressembler à aucun. (Rougier 1966, p. 134)

[A universal concept is like those Galtonian pictures that one obtains by superimposing the photographs of several members of the same family, and which call all to mind in a vague and ill-defined way without actually resembling any particular one.]

The terms which designate such notions Ockham calls terms of second intention. Now, science relates to terms of first intention – that is to say, intuitive knowledge is the point of departure for experimental knowledge. Terms of second intention feed into logic.

How then does an expression like "Man is mortal" have meaning if the terms involved designate concepts and not realities? Terms which designate universal concepts must signify the same things as terms of first intention, but they must designate them in another fashion. Terms of first intention designate in a clear and distinct fashion, terms of second intention in a confused and indistinct fashion (Rougier 1966, p. 135). (Rougier earlier had used the word "flou" in relation to this "unclear" mode of designating. One term used to translate it is "soft", and, in the context, the notion of "soft focus" comes to mind; it also makes one think of fuzzy sets.)

If only individual things have a real existence, the whole ontological structure which the scholastics had elaborated collapses.

Thomas d'Aquin et Henri de Gand avait posé, en plus de l'existence actuelle (*esse existentiae*), une existence essentielle (*esse essentiae*). Les Scotistes, à leur tour, avaient distingué dans l'existence essentielle l'existence créable (*esse creabile*), l'existence intelligible (*esse intelligibile*), l'existence connue (*esse intellectum vel cognitum*). De ces diverses essences, certains Scotistes faisaient autant d'existences séparées, douées d'une réalité véritable, encore que diminuée. Ockham rejette tout ce fatras. Hors de l'existence actuelle, il n'y a que la possibilité logique, la non-contradiction. (Rougier 1966, pp. 135-136)

[Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Gand had postulated, in addition to actual existence (*esse existentiae*), an essential existence (*esse essentiae*). The Scotists, in turn, had distinguished within essential existence between "creable" existence (*esse creabile*), intelligible existence (*esse intelligibile*), and known existence (*esse intellectum vel cognitum*). Certain Scotists saw these diverse essences as so many separate existences, endowed with a true though diminished reality. Ockham rejected all this rubbish. Outside of actual existence, there is only logical possibility, non-contradiction.]

The nominalists, then, exposed as pseudo-problems the core issues of rational theology. Scholasticism, conceived of as an attempt to reconcile reason and faith by establishing the fundamentals of belief as necessary truths and by defending revealed dogmas by philosophical arguments against the objections of non-believers and heretics, was definitively undermined (Rougier 1966, p. 137). A defense of, for example, transubstantiation requires an appeal to aspects of the now discredited ontological machinery of Thomism (notably to the notion of a real distinction between substance and accidents). Indeed, not only can dogmas such as transubstantiation, the trinity and the incarnation not be effectively defended, without the terms of Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, they can't even be clearly stated.

Ockham rejected also the notion that the fundamentals of belief could be demonstrated by reason. He purported to demonstrate the inconsistency of the proofs for the existence of God. He even insisted that the spirituality and immortality of the soul were not things which either experience or reason could prove. Introspection reveals for Ockham merely a series of psychological states, joy, sadness, desires, intellectual operations, but no immaterial substance

which would be the subject of these experiences and the "form" of our body. So any belief in the soul must be based on faith alone (Rougier 1966, p. 139).

Ockham refused to argue *a priori* from conventional definitions. There was no reason to believe that conventional definitions were based in reality. True knowledge, for Ockham, was based solely on sensible or internal intuition. His logical position inclines towards radical phenomenalism: just as our external senses fail to reveal the essence of physical objects, so introspection (internal intuition) reveals merely states of consciousness rather than a substantial soul (Rougier 1966, p. 140).

Nicolas d'Autrecourt [died after 1350] developed an important notion implicit in Ockham's theory of knowledge. He argued that if, apart from faith, the only true knowledge had to derive from experience and discursive reason based on the principle of non-contradiction, then the conclusion of a syllogism is implicit in its premises. That is why one cannot accept the premises and reject the conclusion of a validly structured syllogism without contradiction.

Le conséquent est donc identique à l'antécédent ou à une partie de l'antécédent. De là résulte le caractère analytique, nous dirions aujourd'hui tautologique, du raisonnement. (Rougier 1966, pp. 141-142)

[The consequent is therefore identical to the antecedent or a part of the antecedent. From this fact results the analytic or – as we would say today – the tautological character of reasoning.]

By referring to William of Ockham and Nicolas d'Autrecourt as 'les Humes du moyen âge', Rougier (1966, p. 145) lays himself open to the criticism which Russell makes of historians of philosophy who interpret thinkers in the light of their successors. Russell follows Ernest E. Moody in seeing William of Ockham as being primarily intent on establishing an Aristotle freed from Augustinian and Arabic influences (Russell 1961, p. 462). Russell emphasizes, following Moody, continuities in Ockham's thought with Aristotle and Aquinas and discontinuities with the Scotists (1961, p. 463).

Rougier, on the other hand, tends to emphasize the discontinuities of Ockham's thought with that of Aristotle and Aquinas, though he also recognized Ockham's debt to Aquinas, and even to Duns Scotus. Ockham rejected, says Rougier, the realism of substantial forms which the Thomists erected on an Aristotelian foundation (1966, p. 46). The continuities of Ockham's

thought with that of his predecessors which Rougier does highlight tend to be those which fed into nominalistic fideism.

Rougier argues that Ockham's view on the freedom of the divine will owes much to Scotus' interpretation of Aquinas' view of God as "pure act" (1966, p. 146). God is essentially a will before being an intellect. This notion has the effect of delinking faith and reason. Though Ockham did not go as far as Suarez who explicitly stated that the principle of contradiction did not apply to God, his divine voluntarism negates the whole thrust of scholasticism. He abandons any attempt to prove rationally either the necessity of church dogmas or even the possibility of defending them rationally against the objections of heretics (Rougier 1966, p. 147).

Rougier emphasizes that the nominalism of William of Ockham and his followers reoriented philosophy towards logic and physics, so freeing it from the yoke of theology.

Entre le Théologie positive et la Philosophie, il n'y a plus place pour la Métaphysique. (Rougier 1966, pp. 145-146)

[Between positive theology and philosophy [or science], there is no longer a place for metaphysics.]

Russell has a similar view:

By insisting on the possibility of studying logic and human knowledge without reference to metaphysics and theology, Occam's work encouraged scientific research. (1961, p. 465.)

Rougier charts this process. He notes that, though the ecclesiastical authorities condemned in 1339, in 1340, and again in 1346 the new teachings which decoupled reason from faith, most of the leading academics at the University of Paris remained Ockhamists; and from Paris the movement spread to Italy and Germany (1966, pp. 149, 150-151). And so a climate of thought favourable for the development of experimental science spread through parts of Europe. Aristotelian physics and metaphysics were attacked by Jean Buridan and Albert de Saxe. Nicolas Oresme was a precursor to Descartes in mathematics and was a pioneer of the new astronomy, arguing for the rotation of the earth (Rougier 1966, pp. 155-156).

This story is a particularly central and important one for Rougier. It is the story of a paradigm shift from a scholastic mentality based on metaphysical realism, within which reason is shackled to metaphysics and religion, to an empiricist mentality, within which reason may be freely and directly applied to problems of the physical (and the social) world. Rougier's contribution to the *Encyclopedia of unified science* was to be a work on this period in the history of European thought. Though this particular project was abandoned, Rougier's oeuvre includes an impressive body of material on the scholastic mentality and its dissolution. Ockham and the French nominalists were the heroes of the story, but, the villains were not the scholastic philosophers, for whom Rougier shows considerable respect, but rather the Church authorities. Indeed, it was not simply a case of one framework overcoming another, but rather of scholasticism, in a sense, defeating itself. For scholasticism contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. It slowly became clear that there was simply no way of deciding which of the many possible ways of solving the problem of the relation between reason and faith was correct, and this very diversity of possible interpretation pointed to the emptiness of the problem (Rougier 1966, p. 173).

The longevity and power of scholasticism was based on its belief in the universal validity of an Aristotelian ontology. Sometimes, as in 'La scolastique et la logique' (1935, pp. 108-109), Rougier sees this belief as deriving from a linguistic accident, from the syntax of Greek or the Indo-European language family, but elsewhere he suggests a more profound – and indeed universal – cause. He sees such an ontology as deriving from a structural illusion of the human mind – a natural human tendency to reify concepts (1966, p. 174).⁵ Such a tendency is intrinsically inimical to empiricism. When tied – as it was in the Middle Ages – to a belief in revealed dogma it effectively blocked for a thousand years the scientific study of the universe and so the beneficial effects that science can bring to human life and society (Rougier 1966, p. 174).

In his extensive analysis of scholasticism, Rougier claimed to have identified principles which are common to the great scholastic philosophers, and he cites from an impressive but disconcertingly disparate (in terms of time and place) array of thinkers.⁶ Such an ambitious project could easily degenerate into a process whereby the author, rather than discovering an intellectual framework, actually builds one. Indeed, the very ease with which Rougier claims to have isolated the underlying principles arouses suspicion. He states that, when he set to work, everything fell easily into place.

Je me mis à étudier de plus près les grands maîtres scolastiques et je n'eus aucune peine à dégager de leurs écrits les principes d'une mentalité spécifique. (Rougier 1961b, p. 35)

[I set out to study more closely the great masters of scholasticism, and I had no trouble in extracting from their writings the principles of a specific mentality.]

My judgement is that one is dealing here with thinkers who do indeed share many presuppositions and beliefs, but there is no guarantee that another scholar would derive from their work the same set of principles and axioms that Rougier did. In fact, as we will see, Rougier's own various accounts differ slightly, especially in respect of the logical order and form of the most basic principles.

In the 1935 *Erkenntnis* article, the starting-point of the analysis – and purportedly the first principle of scholasticism – is that all judgements are predicative (Rougier 1935, p. 101). This belief of the scholastics arose from a simple accident of syntax, specifically, that Indo-European languages allow verbs to be decomposed into the verb “to be” and a participle – “Le cheval est courant” for “Le cheval court”. This contingency of syntax gives rise, says Rougier, to a spontaneous metaphysic.

Il conduisait à croire que le monde est explicable *en termes de substances, de modes et d'accidents*, au lieu qu'il nous apparaît aujourd'hui qu'il ne peut s'expliquer qu'*en termes de relations et de structures*. (Rougier 1935, p. 101)

[It led to the belief that the world is explicable *in terms of substances, modes and accidents*, instead of how it appears to us today, explicable only *in terms of relations and structures*.]

So, for the scholastics, unaware that the copula is a grammatical category without logical significance, the universe is a collection of substances which science seeks to define, classify and order. The basic issue, then, is whether a particular attribute belongs to a subject in virtue of its essence or by contingent (external) factors (Rougier 1935, pp. 101-102).

This belief that all judgements are predicative had particularly profound consequences when applied to judgements of existence. Specifically, it leads to the ontological proof of the

existence of God in which existence is treated as a property that God possesses in virtue of his essence, and that other beings possess contingently.

All of the arguments of the scholastics, claims Rougier, are based on the principle of sufficient reason: 'toute chose a une raison d'être ce qu'elle est' (1935, p. 102). This principle was interpreted by the scholastics in terms of the two previously explained errors.

[T]out jugement est prédicatif, les jugements d'existence sont des jugements prédicatifs, c'est-à-dire dans l'hypothèse substantialiste du monde, qui ramène tout à des rapports de substance à [*sic*] accidents. (Rougier 1935, p. 102)

[All judgements are predicative, [and so] judgements of existence are predicative judgements. [This is interpreted in the context of] the substantialist hypothesis of the world which brings everything back to an account based on substance and accidents.]

And so the principle of sufficient reason may be split into two others: the principle of essential belonging ('appartenance essentielle') and its converse, the realist principle of exclusion. Aquinas' proof of the immortality of the soul is based on the first of these principles which says that a thing possesses intrinsically and immediately (*per se et immediate*) all that its definition includes or which may be deduced syllogistically therefrom: the body dies when it is separated from the form from which it receives being and reality, whereas the soul, which is pure form, cannot be separated from itself (Rougier 1935, pp. 102-103).

The converse of this principle, the realist principle of exclusion, may also be called the principle of accidental attribution. Rougier quotes a version of this principle from Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, and the 'particularly laconic' version of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Greek, and in French: 'Ce qui n'est pas une chose proprement est cette chose par accident.' The principle says, in effect, that all attributes which don't belong to a thing in virtue of its definition – *per se et immediate* – belong to it only contingently (*ab alio*). It is central to the ontological realism of the scholastics who believed that mere conceptual analysis and discursive reason revealed truths about the world. The notion of the contingency of movement – discussed above in relation to the views of Garrigou-Lagrange – clearly derives from this principle. Rougier highlights the fallacy of believing that mere conceptual analysis can lead to knowledge of the world on numerous occasions. The point is made in the *Erkenntnis* article

(Rougier 1935, *passim*), as well as in the course of telling the story of his exchanges with Garrigou-Lagrange (Rougier 1961b, p. 34).

In fact, in the later article, he begins his analysis of scholasticism by explicitly stating the offending principle:

A toute notion distincte dans l'esprit correspond adéquatement, hors de lui, une réalité objective qui contient formellement tout ce qui est inclus dans la définition de cette notion. (Rougier 1961b, p. 35)

[Every clear idea in the mind is associated with an objective reality distinct from the idea which formally contains all which is included in the definition of the idea.]

From there he moves on to the principle of sufficient reason, and from there to the principles of essential belonging ('*appartenance essentielle*') and accidental belonging (elsewhere called the realist principle of exclusion).

In the *Erkenntnis* article (Rougier 1935, p. 104), the realist principle of sufficient reason (as distinct from the principle of sufficient reason *tout court!*) is presented as being equivalent to the twin principles of essential and accidental belonging. This new principle Rougier states as follows:

Toute chose a en soi ou dans une autre la raison d'être de ce qui lui convient; en soi et immédiatement, si cela lui convient par ce qui la constitue en propre; en autrui, si cela ne lui convient pas selon ce qui lui convient en propre. (Rougier 1935, p. 104)

[Everything has in itself or in another [thing] its appropriate reason for being; in itself and directly if its appropriate reason for being derives from its own nature; in others if its appropriate reason for being does not derive from its own nature.]

This principle is sufficient to establish the ontological proof of God's existence and to prove the contingency of created beings, but another principle is required for the scholastic arguments for the existence of God which derive from a consideration of created things. This additional principle Rougier calls the Aristotelian principle of the first cause. It says, in effect, that one cannot have an infinite chain of subordinate causes (Rougier 1935, p. 105).

Now, it will come as no surprise to those who have followed the argument this far to learn that the scholastics condensed the realist principle of sufficient reason and the Aristotelian principle of the first cause into a single formula. This formula is at the basis of their proofs for the existence of God derived from created things. Rougier calls it the scholastic principle of the necessity of a first essential cause: *Quod est non per se, est ab alio, quod est per se.*

Though Rougier tries to keep the principles he numbers and labels separate and distinct, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion – which Rougier’s analysis in fact underscores – that they are very closely related and reducible one to another. Ultimately, how many principles are there? Two? One? Another problem is that various different (differently formulated?) principles are singled out as primary or fundamental, which again suggests that the different formulations are just various ways of saying one (or two...) not terribly well defined thing(s).

Thus the scholastic principle of the necessity of a first essential cause seems to take us back to where we began.

Si les Scolastiques font le saut périlleux qui consiste à passer du contingent au nécessaire, du relatif à l’absolu, de l’imparfait au parfait, de la créature au créateur, c’est en vertu de leur principe: *quod est non per se, est ab alio, quod est per se.* Mais, ce principe postule que tous les jugements se ramènent à des jugements prédicatifs; que le monde s’explique en termes de substances et d’accidents; que les distinctions conceptuelles que la pensée abstraite introduit dans le devenir sensible sont fondées en nature, si bien que la pensée est adéquate à la réalité. (Rougier 1935, p. 106)

[If the scholastics make the perilous jump which consists in passing from the contingent to the necessary, from the relative to the absolute, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the creature to the creator, it is in virtue of their principle: *quod est non per se, est ab alio, quod est per se* [i.e. the principle of the necessity of a first essential cause]. But this principle postulates that all judgements are ultimately predicative judgements; that the world is explained in terms of substances and accidents; that the conceptual distinctions which abstract thought introduces into the sensory world of becoming are founded in nature, so that thought alone is enough to grasp reality.]

The basic analysis seems plausible enough: much scholastic reasoning does indeed assume that all judgements are predicative and that reality is structured along the same lines as our thoughts. My only concern is that, as a number of these principles are being presented as fundamental and reducible one to another, the whole elaborate structure which Rougier has set up threatens to collapse in on itself. But then, perhaps this is Rougier's very point.

For he proceeds to present yet another principle, which he sees as a version of the scholastic principle of the necessity of a first cause (Rougier 1935, p. 106), and as derivable from it (1935, p. 107). This principle he calls the existential principle of the maximum. It states that in all things susceptible of degree there must exist a maximum. Rougier finds this principle (which is the basis of the proof of God's existence *ex gradibus perfectionis quae in rebus inveniuntur*) in Aristotle, Aquinas, Nicholas of Cusa and, indeed, in Plato who used it to prove the separate existence of ideas (1935, pp. 107-108).

Unfortunately, this principle falls foul of the theory of types which forbids treating notions of classes like notions of individuals. Likewise, other scholastic principles are contrary to the principles of modern logic, notably to a modern understanding of judgements of relation and of existence (which may not be treated as an attribute).⁷

Rougier's scholarly analysis of scholasticism is probably the most extensive such critique ever attempted. Its importance was recognized by Alfred Loisy and by Charles Guignebert in book reviews (1925 and 1927 respectively), as well as by Ludwig von Mises (see Chapter 11). Philipp Frank (1949, p. 48) credited Rougier with having provided 'the best all-round criticism of the school philosophy that I know of...'.⁸

Rougier sought to demonstrate something which has often been simply assumed – that is, the incompatibility of much of scholastic thought with a modern understanding of logic and science. The basic conclusions of his logical analysis complement the historical analysis which sees scholasticism at once as hindering the development of science for hundreds of years while yet representing a continuation of the tradition of Greek rationalism. It was not until the 14th century, when French nominalism arose out of the matrix of scholastic thought, that reason was freed from the yoke of theology and metaphysics so that it might be applied again, as in the golden age of Greek science, to empirical questions.

A passionate, almost religious, devotion to science (seen as the fruitful combination of empirical and abstract thought, first achieved by the Greeks) lies behind Rougier's work on

scholasticism. In fact, he closes his major work on the subject with a reference to the miracle of Greek science. Alluding to the then recent Thomist revival, Rougier had written:

Un retour à la scolastique serait un retour à la plus fâcheuse mésaventure intellectuelle de notre espèce, qui a failli compromettre définitivement les inépuisables bienfaits du seul miracle qu'enregistre l'histoire: le miracle grec, la science hellène. (Rougier 1925, p. 809)

[A return to scholasticism would be a return to the most regrettable intellectual misadventure of our species, which almost compromised definitively the inexhaustible benefits of the only miracle which history records: the Greek miracle, Hellenic science.]

Rougier sees scientific knowledge – limited as it is – as being real knowledge and, as such, as being infinitely preferable to the pseudo-knowledge of scholastic metaphysics. Those who seek to revive these doctrines have been trapped in the “magic circle” of ontological realism (Rougier 1925, p. 808).

Ils oublient la leçon de l'histoire: la route royale que semble ouvrir le réalisme ontologique est une impasse qui aboutit toujours aux mêmes antinomies, aux mêmes pseudo-problèmes, insolubles parce que mal posés. Mieux vaut se résigner à savoir peu de choses, mais les savoir effectivement, que de se targuer de connaître la réalité en soi et de se repaître de vaines logomachies, qui ne rejoignent jamais un fait saisissable, une prévision contrôlable. Ce qui apparaît au métaphysicien comme l'objet de la connaissance la plus auguste et la plus certaine, l'être en tant que l'être, n'est que le plus pauvre de nos concepts, la plus creuse de nos abstractions, idole la plus fantomatique de notre pensée. (Rougier 1925, pp. 808-809)

[They forget the lesson of history: that the royal road which ontological realism seems to open up is a dead end which always finishes with the same antinomies, the same pseudo-problems, insoluble because ill posed. Better to resign oneself to know only a few things, but to know them truly, than to pride oneself on knowing reality in itself and to find one's intellectual nourishment in empty disputes about words which never connect with a perceptible fact or a testable prediction. What appears to the metaphysician as the grandest and surest object of knowledge – *being in itself* –

is but the poorest of our concepts, the most hollow of our abstractions, the most ghostly idol of our thought.]

¹ This paradox is of course implicit in relativism *per se*, and so is not specific to Rougier's particular version of relativism.

² Rougier's *magnum opus* on scholasticism, *La scolastique et le thomisme*, upon which his later writings on this subject are squarely based, was published in 1925. Many of my references, however, will be to two more readily available – and probably more widely read – sources: a booklet (*Histoire d'une faillite philosophique: la scolastique*) published in 1966 which recapitulates many of the key historical themes of his earlier work on scholasticism, and an article published in *Erkenntnis* in 1935 under the title 'La scolastique et la logique'.

³ Rougier (1925) exemplifies both of these approaches. It is essentially a critical history, describing and criticizing a broad range of philosophical and theological traditions with a view to undermining the credibility of scholastic thought and the ontological realism which it implies. 'Cet ouvrage,' wrote Rougier in the preface, 'est consacré à l'étude historique du problème dont la Scolastique a discuté par excellence, celui de l'accord de la raison et de la foi, et à l'examen critique de la solution qu'en a proposée le Thomisme et que le Magistère ecclésiastique a solennellement adoptée' (1925, p. XVII). See also Rougier (1925, p. 808).

⁴ The latter view, attractive in its simplicity, is still held by the Coptic, Syrian, Jacobite and Armenian churches.

⁵ Rougier had, of course, already broached this issue in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a). See discussion in my Chapter 1.

⁶ Though Rougier does utilize a wide range of sources, Aquinas' two *Summas* clearly constitute the core texts of his analysis. This fact may be seen to give Rougier's work a more limited significance, but a greater claim to coherence and objectivity.

⁷ Rougier's point here may be seen to have been undermined by mid- and later-20th century developments in modal logic.

⁸ Frank explicitly refers in this comment to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* rather than to *La scolastique et le thomisme*.

PART TWO: THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

Chapter 3

Renan and Rougier

The focus so far has been on Rougier's writings on the philosophy of mathematics and on logic and reasoning. This dimension of his thought may be seen to have been inspired by his early encounter with the work of Poincaré. But, as we have seen, much of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* and much of his work on scholasticism has a strong historical orientation which complements his logico-mathematical concerns. This historical orientation clearly owes much to thinkers like Taine and Renan. Renan was especially important because he fired Rougier's interest not just in the historical perspective, but also in religion. As noted above, in 1979 Rougier singled out Renan's *Vie de Jésus* to stand beside Poincaré's *La science et l'hypothèse* as a crucial influence on his thought. The words of Rougier's tribute are revealing. Regarding Poincaré, he had simply stated that his work had revealed to him the part that convention plays in science. Regarding Renan, he was more effusive.

[I.]a *Vie de Jésus* de Renan [...] me révéla l'intérêt de l'Histoire des religions et m'enthousiasma par le style envoûtant du plus grand écrivain français du XIXe siècle à côté de Chateaubriand. (Allais 1990, p. 44)

[Renan's *Life of Jesus* revealed to me the fascination of the study of the history of religion and enraptured me by its magical style, Renan being (with Chateaubriand) the greatest of 19th century French writers.]

Renan is significant for Rougier both for the content and the style of his writings. The fascination with religion seems to be strangely linked to aesthetic factors. Interestingly, both of the writers Rougier praises so highly on stylistic grounds wrote about religion, and specifically Christianity. Renan, as we will see, was deeply affected by his Roman Catholic education and wrote extensively on religious and cultural history. Chateaubriand [1768-1848] was most famous for his book, *Le génie du christianisme*, which emphasizes the aesthetic and human appeal of Christianity. Implicit in Rougier's identification of Renan and Chateaubriand as the paragons of 19th century French literature (a surprising judgement, really) is a profoundly conservative literary aesthetic, and one which is tied to the Christian heritage of Europe.

Ernest Renan [1823-1892] had been a young seminarian who, in the face of recent scientific and philological discoveries, ceased to believe in Catholic and Christian dogma. He abandoned his clerical studies, and became a positivist of sorts, whilst retaining elements of a Romantic outlook and – curiously perhaps – an essentially mystical, spiritual, even religious view of the world.

The positivist belief in progress was central to Renan's philosophy. Lévy-Bruhl (1924) discusses this tradition, this faith in progress which marked so many French 18th and 19th century thinkers, in terms of an inversion of the Golden Age legend.

We must forsake the false and disheartening notion that good has preceded evil; we must establish the comforting and inspiring notion that our labours will increase the welfare of our children. This is an "essentially religious" idea. (Lévy-Bruhl 1924, p. 355)

Though he renounced Christian dogmas, Renan never really renounced spirituality. He gave the notion of progress an overtly metaphysical and almost Hegelian sense, seeing mankind as the consciousness of the universe and indeed as evolving towards a superior form of consciousness (Lévy-Bruhl 1924, p. 408). According to John Passmore, Ernest Renan

... united the German concept of an evolving God and the French doctrine that the advance of science must bring progress in its train. By so doing he gave birth to the first religion of science. (1970, p. 250)

Renan saw the substitution of the category of becoming for that of being as one of the great advances of 19th century thought. This, coupled with a substitution of the notion of the relative for that of the absolute and movement for immobility, led to a new view of God.

Renan conceives of God no longer as a personal being, absolute and eternal, but as a spiritual reality emerging from human history. (Chadbourne 1968, p. 50)

As might be expected, given his broad knowledge of cultural and religious history, Renan's view of progress was not unqualified. For Renan,

... [p]rogress is a matter not of simple, irresistible forward march, but of "oscillations," each advance being followed by a temporary setback. Humanity moves toward perfection through a succession of imperfect forms. (Chadbourne 1968, p. 51)

Though sharing many beliefs and attitudes with Comte and the Enlightenment tradition, he differed from them on the importance of history and religion. Mainstream positivists were uninterested in history and blind to the seminal importance of religion. For them, religion represented a primitive stage of development from which little could be learned and which was destined to be forgotten in the new positivist paradise. Renan, by contrast, saw value in the study of history and religion, and devoted himself primarily to the historical sciences, which he believed threw more light on humanity than did the physical sciences.

According to Renan, Comte made another error which was not unrelated to his failure to appreciate the importance of the study of history and religion. He failed to appreciate the deep variety of mankind (see Lévy-Bruhl 1924, p. 418). We have already noted Rougier's early acknowledgement of the insights of Renan, Taine and Lévy-Bruhl in this matter.¹

Philology – or the history of language and culture – was Renan's chief scholarly focus. His work was deeply affected by the philological tradition which incorporated many disparate elements, some scientific (or positivistic), some humanistic. The philological tradition was associated with a tradition of linguistic idealism², and was the source of the Aryan myth.

The discovery in the 18th century that Sanskrit was related to Greek and Latin led to the development of the notion of an Indo-European language family, and consequently to the notion of an Indo-European (or Aryan) civilization, incorporating many great cultures of the past, including northern Indian and Persian cultures, into a single cultural pattern or model. This civilization was believed to have been created by an ancient, mysterious and spectacularly successful conquering race.

As Semitic languages are not a part of the Indo-European language family, a cultural divide was perceived between the Semitic and Indo-European cultures, between, for example, biblical and classical culture. This divide (at once cultural and racial) was, as we will shortly see, something of a mainspring of Renan's thinking.

Renan expressed the general philosophical and religious outlook of his maturity in his *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques* [1876]. The character of Philolèthe (generally taken to be Renan's mouthpiece) expresses two beliefs which constitute the core of Renan's religious philosophy. Firstly, he expresses his anti-supernaturalism by denying the existence of any

superior being which is capable of intervening in nature and history (Renan 1947, pp. 564 ff.). Secondly, he insists that

... le monde a un but et travaille à une oeuvre mystérieuse. (Renan 1947, p. 572)

[... the world has a purpose and labors at mysterious work.]

In a striking image Renan compares man to an operator at the Gobelins tapestry works in Paris, weaving the reverse side of a tapestry he does not see. This belief in the benevolent “Machiavellianism” of nature leads to a sense of acceptance, a Stoic commitment to conform to nature’s purpose.

Renan’s *Vie de Jésus*, the work which inspired the young Rougier, touches on these and other themes. An early [1863], popular work, it is written in an urbane though Romantic style in which Renan’s broad knowledge (enhanced by his own travels in the region) of the history and culture of the Near East is woven into a rhapsodic and reflective narrative.

Something that strikes a modern reader particularly strongly is the attitude to race which runs through the book. Renan shows himself to be a man of his time by speaking disparagingly of, for example, African peoples who ‘have never emerged from fetishism’ (1897, p. 2). But his main focus, in the *Vie de Jésus* as in most of his other writings on cultural and social themes, is on the Indo-European and Semitic races – ‘the two great races which, in one sense, have made humanity what it is’ (Renan 1897, p. 3). Renan is not altogether even-handed in his treatment of these two traditions, revealing himself to be slightly uncomfortable with a Jewish Jesus! The infinite delicacy with which Renan expresses himself on this matter is nothing short of comical. He points out that, at the time of Christ, the population of Galilee was very mixed in race and ‘there were many who were not Jews (Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, and even Greeks)’ (Renan 1897, p. 15). Many of these non-Jews, he asserts, converted to Judaism.

It is therefore impossible to [...] ascertain what blood flowed in the veins of him who has contributed most to efface the distinctions of blood amongst mankind. (Renan 1897, p. 15)

Renan’s laying the blame for the death of Jesus with the Jews – a standard Christian position implicit in the Gospel narratives – also seems to reveal a degree of anti-Semitism.

[N]ations, like individuals, have their responsibilities, and if ever a crime was a national crime, it was the death of Jesus. (Renan 1897, p. 259)

Though he exhibited in other works (e.g. Renan (1952, p. 740)) a profound respect for some of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, in which he saw the beginnings of a new, purified religion, in the *Vie de Jésus*, Renan condemns in fairly extreme terms earlier parts of the Jewish bible.

The Pentateuch has [...] been the first code of religious terrorism in the world. (Renan 1897, p. 260)

By contrast, the Roman imperial system (a product of Indo-European culture) is praised for its moderation.

Though in some respects very stern, the Roman power was as yet but little inclined to be meddlesome, and permitted a good deal of liberty. Those great brutal despotisms, terrible though they might be in repressing sedition, were not so suspicious as are powers which have a dogmatic faith to defend. (Renan 1897, p. 41)

The *Vie de Jésus* is more like an extended essay or meditation than a history, and one of the key themes is the nature of religion. Indeed, the book may be seen as a statement of Renan's personal religion, which he saw as a sort of original, pure Christianity. In accordance with the views expressed in his later *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques*, the supernaturalism of the Biblical miracle stories is totally rejected.

Renan emphasizes the non-dogmatic tenor of the time of Christ, and the intellectual and spiritual freedom which that implied.

The Jew of this epoch was as little theological as possible. He did not speculate on the essence of the Deity; beliefs about angels, about the destinies of man, about the divine hypostases, the first germs of which might already be perceived, were free beliefs – meditations, to which each one surrendered himself according to the turn of his mind... (Renan 1897, p. 11)

Jesus himself 'had neither dogma nor system,' he writes (Renan 1897, p. 30). Though he acknowledges that Jesus was untouched by the Greek naturalism which he (Renan) holds in such high esteem³, he still speaks positively of Jesus and of religion. Jesus gave religion

... an impetus greater than that which any other man has been capable of giving – an impetus with which, in all probability, no further advance will be comparable. (Renan 1897, p. 13)

Later centuries obscured the pure religion of Christ and his early followers.

It was only at the beginning of the third century, when Christianity had fallen into the hands of argumentative races, mad with dialectic and metaphysics, that the fever for definitions commenced which makes the history of the Church the history of one immense controversy. (Renan 1897, pp. 11-12)

There is clear evidence in the *Vie de Jésus* that its author is driven by strong but conflicting feelings regarding the religion of his childhood and youth. The above quotation betrays an obvious antagonism towards the metaphysical and doctrinal preoccupations of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, and Renan's negative attitude to religious dogma is evident throughout his oeuvre. But Renan not only retains an interest in religion: he retains strong religious feelings, and a powerful attachment to a form of religion which owes much, I think, to the devotional (as distinct from the doctrinal) elements of Catholicism. Renan found refuge in his own curious combination of quasi-devotional enthusiasm – centred about a somewhat idealized and romanticized image of Christ – and Greek naturalism. Renan's "purified" Christianity looks in fact like a modified Stoicism, a Stoicism which has been, as it were, infused by the warmth of Christian emotions. We have already noted Renan's apparent affirmation of belief in some kind of providential force (a doctrine shared by Stoicism and all forms of Christianity) in *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques*. A similar view is evident in the *Vie de Jésus*, in which Renan speaks of 'the divine end which the world pursues through innumerable falterings' (1897, p. 19).

Though one cannot simply impute to Rougier the same beliefs as Renan, it will become clear that their respective views on religion, culture and value have much in common. Rougier's religious and ethical philosophy, as expressed for example in his book on Celsus, seems close to that of Renan. Certainly, an intervening God and magic are rejected, and yet great respect is shown for the general thrust of Platonic and Stoic philosophy.

One important element common both to Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and Rougier's work on Celsus is the sympathetic treatment of the Roman Empire. Renan had asserted that, insofar as it did not seek to impose religious dogma, the Empire allowed a large measure of spiritual freedom. His

contrast between Jewish fanaticism and pagan tolerance is echoed by Rougier.⁴ This, as we will shortly see, is a dominant theme of Rougier's *Celse contre les chrétiens*.

Rougier's debt to Renan is a remarkable one, both profound and longlasting. First inspired by Renan in 1902 or 1903, Rougier continued to quote him and echo his views on many issues throughout his long life. Alain de Benoist recalls that at the beginning of the 1960s, Rougier helped launch the Geneva-based *Guilde Ernest Renan* which published a new edition of Renan's *L'avenir de la science* prefaced by Rougier (Rougier 1997, p. ix). It appears that Rougier was involved with the *Cercle Ernest-Renan* in Paris throughout his later years, and many of his last articles and reviews appeared in its journals.

The breadth of Renan's influence on Rougier makes it somewhat difficult to characterize in summary form. It spanned the areas of religion, social philosophy, linguistic and cultural history, and impinged not just on scholarly themes and ideas but also on general and aesthetic attitudes.⁵

In respect of religion and culture, Rougier's general interests and attitudes are very similar to those of Renan. For example, he shared Renan's fascination with the Judeo-Christian tradition and its interactions with the classical world, and his attitudes – as will become clear in the next chapter – mirror Renan's in many respects.

As an historian of religion, Rougier focused largely on the pagan traditions of the Hellenistic and Roman world, and on early Christianity. Three key texts are *Celse contre les chrétiens* (1977, reissued with a new introduction by Alain de Benoist 1997), *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la civilisation antique* (1974, 2nd ed. 1977) which Rougier saw (1997, p. 9) as a sort of companion volume to the first-named work, and *La religion astrale des pythagoriciens* (1959). It should be noted that these works are in fact reissues of, or based on, earlier works. The book on Celsus was first published in 1925; and *La religion astrale des pythagoriciens* is in effect a new edition of his much earlier work *Les origines astronomiques de la croyance pythagoricienne en l'immortalité de l'âme* (1932). Renan's influence is particularly evident in respect of those works which deal directly with early Christianity or which – like the work on Celsus – deal with the contrasts between the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions.

The next two chapters deal with Rougier's books on Celsus and on the astral religion of the neo-Pythagoreans respectively. An essay from *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la*

civilisation antique is analysed in Chapter 10 in the context of a discussion of changes in Rougier's social thought.

¹ See Rougier (1920a, p. 455).

² See Chapter 7.

³ Speaking of Jesus, Renan writes (1897, p. 266): 'Although born at a time when the principles of positive science had already been proclaimed, he lived entirely in supernatural ideas.' This in the context of a section praising Lucretius and the negation of miracle.

⁴ It should be noted that Nietzsche made the same point (1974a, pp. 64 ff.).

⁵ I have discussed in Chapter 7 Rougier's participation in a tradition of idealism with respect to language and culture of which Renan was very much a part. The Aryan ideal and the question of race are discussed in Chapter 13.

Chapter 4

Celsus

Though Rougier's fascination with religion and history was – thanks largely to Renan – firmly entrenched from his early years, his appointment to a position in Rome in 1920 was extremely significant in determining the precise direction of his scholarly activities. It has already been noted that his work on scholasticism was inspired by encounters with scholarly clerics – most notably with the Dominican Garrigou-Lagrange – in the imperial city. Further, encounters in Rome with Franz Cumont, a world-renowned historian of religion, encouraged him to follow in the footsteps of Renan and devote his intellectual energies to religious history.

Just as significant as these scholarly contacts was his emotional reaction to the city itself. The physical grandeur of Rome captivated him and reinforced his classical aesthetic. Many years later, he recalled the experience:

Sitôt que je vis Rome, je fus envoûté... les thermes de Dioclétien et de Caracalla, le forum républicain, les forums impériaux, le Palatin et le Colisée, la villa Hadriana et Tivoli, les merveilleux musées d'antiques me fascinèrent par la volonté de puissance, l'esprit de grandeur, le culte de la beauté qui s'y affirment. (Rougier 1977, p. 7)

[As soon as I saw Rome, I was entranced... the Thermae of Diocletian and of Caracalla, the republican forum, the imperial forums, the Palatine Hill and the Coliseum, Hadrian's villa and Tivoli, the marvellous museums of antiquities. I was fascinated by the will to power, the spirit of grandeur, and the cult of beauty which these works expressed.]

Of all his works, it is the work on Celsus which most clearly embodies Rougier's profound aesthetic and emotional commitment to the values of the classical world. And, appropriately enough, it was in a Roman library that he found the book which led directly to his monograph on the pagan philosopher.

The book was a reconstruction of Celsus' *True doctrine*, a defense of traditional Hellenistic religion and values against the Christians (Rougier 1997, pp. 7 ff.). Rougier was deeply impressed by the work. 'Tout s'éclairait alors dans mon esprit,' he later wrote (Rougier 1997, p. 8). As Alain de Benoist remarks, he clearly found in the work an echo of his own deep

convictions (Rougier 1997, p. xxi). Celsus emphasizes the aristocratic values of antiquity – elegance, tolerance and rationality – and contrasts them with the vulgar and ignorant fanaticism of the early Christians.

Rougier wholeheartedly embraced the vision of an ancient world which proclaimed the harmony of the cosmos and the excellence of human life, glorified by wisdom and beauty. He encapsulated that vision in the book on Celsus which he wrote – in a style reminiscent of the late Romantic rhetoric of Renan – in the course of 1924.¹ The work was published in 1925, and republished in 1926. In 1977 Rougier saw fit to have this early work republished with the text unchanged.

Celse contre les chrétiens (1997)² is an extremely revealing work which incorporates many of the themes of Rougier's later work. It could be seen as one of the first works of Rougier's intellectual maturity: though very subjective in parts, it lacks entirely the occasionally shrill and extreme tone of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, and marks a shift (back?) to an outlook which – though difficult to characterize precisely – might be termed spiritual or religious. Though the Rougier of *Celse contre les chrétiens* is more assertively pagan than the Rougier of later years, though the later Rougier is more reconciled to a Christian worldview, there is no radical discontinuity in his religious thought. Indeed, all the significant elements of Rougier's subsequent views are at least implicit in *Celse*.

Early in the book Rougier describes the character of Celsus, the friend of Lucian, whom he tentatively judges to have been the Celsus who wrote the *True doctrine*:

Tout se passe comme si Celse d'Origène était le sosie de celui de Lucien.³ (1997, p. 21).

[Origen's Celsus looks like the twin of Lucian's Celsus.]

The friend of Lucian was an Epicurean, and the author of the *True doctrine* a Platonist, but, as Rougier points out (1997, p. 20), it was a syncretistic age, and the two philosophies were not totally incompatible. The author of the *True doctrine* showed his Epicureanism in his rejection of anthropocentrism, his denial of a particular providence intervening in the train of things; and his Platonism in his acceptance of a supreme, supra-sensible God far beyond the realm of being but the eminent cause of all things. He was also a Platonist in his interpretation of polytheism which is similar to that of Plutarch and Apuleius (Rougier 1997, p. 22).

At one point Rougier seems to endorse the Platonic over the Stoic mode of interpreting polytheism. The 'grave defect' of the Stoic method of interpreting the gods in purely allegorical terms is that under such a system the individual identities of the deities cannot be sustained, as they became mere elements of nature. On the Platonic interpretation, the gods are subordinate powers of a supreme ultramundane God (Rougier 1997, p. 65). However, any suspicion that Rougier is flirting with a full-fledged neo-Platonism is allayed by his characterization of Celsus' attempts to prove the existence of – and the powers of – these subordinate spirits as superstitious and incompatible with his belief in a universal, providential order (1997, p. 70).

It is clear that the character of Celsus represents an ideal to which Rougier to some degree – perhaps to a great degree – aspires. Lucian praised his friend Celsus for his wisdom, love of truth, the gentleness of his manners and the serenity of his life (Rougier 1997, p. 19). Rougier (1997, p. 21) is similarly impressed by the author of the *True doctrine* who, according to Rougier, never exhibits either meanness or sectarianism. He never attacks the Christians for their morals or personal behaviour, but rather appeals to higher sentiments – to honesty, sincerity, love of concord, social order and piety. His constant concern is to prove to them that, without forfeiting their honour or breaching their faith, they may live in peace with the Empire and fulfil all their duties as citizens. This attitude, notes Rougier, somewhat underplaying the polemical and sometimes aggressive tone of Celsus' text, reveals a great fund of tolerance and generosity of spirit, as well as wisdom. Celsus was an intellectual whose natural goodness did not lead him to betray the imprescriptible rights of reason. Though restrained, his critique was (at least in Rougier's eyes) devastating: irony can be a powerful weapon.

En présence de l'universelle sottise, la réaction de l'homme d'esprit est l'ironie.
(Rougier 1997, p. 21)

[Faced with universal stupidity, the intelligent man will respond with irony.]

According to Rougier, Celsus effectively exposes the absurdities and mystifications of the Jews and Christians whom he knew intimately from his travels and from a close reading of their works. Interestingly, Rougier played a similar role in respect of the neo-Thomists of the 1920s and 1930s, certainly in so far as he immersed himself in their thought-world through reading and personal contact and conducted a sustained attack on their fundamental assertions.

Another even more significant parallel relates to Celsus being a patriot concerned with the barbarian threat to Roman civilization and values. Unlike his more cynical and detached friend Lucian, who merely satirized human folly in the manner, Rougier suggests (1997, p. 22), of a

Voltaire, a Flaubert or a France, Celsus was preoccupied with the salvation of the state. He showed great wisdom and foresight by predicting that the triumph of Christianity would lead to a decline in patriotic sentiment, a barbarian invasion and the wreck of civilization. Rougier's political activism in defense of a stable France and – as he saw it – the values of Western civilization could well have been inspired by the example of Celsus.

The intellectual and moral notion of Hellenism (as distinct from the earlier political notion) grew out of the attempt of philosophers and secular thinkers of the 2nd century to address the Christian threat (Rougier 1997, p. 28). About this time, a Hellenistic self-consciousness arose which expressed itself in numerous treatises of which that of Celsus is a notable example.

Rougier draws on a later definition of Hellenism due to the emperor Julian (1997, pp. 29-30). Interestingly, the emphasis is on science. Julian celebrates the Greek miracle – the creation of speculative, quantitative and deductive science which superseded the limited empirical techniques of the Egyptians and the Babylonians and other oriental peoples. Astronomy, geometry and arithmetic were perfected and fruitfully combined and made into theoretical sciences by the Greeks. Other sciences such as mathematical physics and medicine were developed, as well as musical theory. Non-scientific areas like civil law and the liberal arts were also taken by the Greeks to high levels of excellence. It should be noted that Julian's praise of the Greek heritage was accompanied by contrasts with Semitic culture. He asserts, for example, that many of the areas in which the Greeks excelled remained amongst the Hebrews in a rudimentary and barbarous state.

Rougier attempts to characterize the essential nature of Greek thought and so the intellectual barriers that separated pagan wisdom from Judeo-Christian ideas. Greek thought is characterized primarily by an effort to arrive at a purely rational conception of the universe and of human life (Rougier 1997, p. 31). This rationalism leads to intellectualism in morality which is incompatible with Christian notions of sin, grace and redemption. In the course of outlining the rational criticisms mounted by pagan apologists, Rougier emphasizes their view of the cosmic order, of the harmony of the world. At one point (1997, p. 36) he cites the inspirer of his work in the philosophy of science, Henri Poincaré, who said that the divine is revealed not by the miraculous but by the fact that nature is governed by laws.

This notion of order is central; as is the idealism associated with Hellenistic rationalism. Indeed, both of these notions, the cosmic order, and the identification of the true and pure self with the soul or intellect, are picked up in Rougier's later work on the astral religion of the Pythagoreans.

There are many ways these notions may be addressed, and many possible confusions implicit in them. The extreme asceticism of early Christians and the worldliness of certain strands of classical thought may appear to invalidate Rougier's association of materialism with Judaic elements, but Christian asceticism may be attributed in part to non-Judaic sources – whether Greek or otherwise is irrelevant – and the Hellenism shared by Celsus and Rougier was a worldview deeply marked by Platonic and Stoic modes of thinking.

One way of approaching the issue of materialism is via eschatological doctrines. The Jewish and Christian idea of the resurrection of the body and a future paradise on earth is seen as crude and contemptible (Rougier 1997, p. 40). It is worth dwelling briefly on this notion and the Hellenistic reaction to it because in some ways this point of conflict epitomizes a broader ideological conflict. Rougier notes (1997, p. 42) that the Christian church incorporated the conflict – unresolved – in its teachings. Under the influence of Platonism, the church adopted the notion of the immortality of the soul and individual judgement straight after death, whilst retaining the incompatible Judaic notion of the general resurrection and last judgement. Rougier suggests, however, that the Judaic elements were eclipsed in the minds of the faithful, who embraced Hellenic idealism.

En fait, on peut dire que ce sont les idées palestiniennes de résurrection et de paradis sur la terre qui ont cédé le pas, dans l'esprit des fidèles, à la foi en l'immortalité de l'âme et au jugement particulier, ce qui représente une victoire de l'idéalisme grec sur la matérialisme sémitique. (Rougier 1997, p. 42)

[In fact, one could say that the Palestinian ideas of the resurrection of the body and an earthly paradise were replaced in the minds of the faithful by faith in the immortality of the soul and belief in individual judgement after death. This can be seen, in effect, as a victory of Greek idealism over Semitic materialism.]

The potential for applying such ideas to broader ideological issues is clear. Rougier did so in an article in the *Revue de Paris* (1928). The article is essentially a critique of modern capitalist society which Rougier sees, like Weber whom he cites, as deriving from the Reformation. According to Rougier, the (Jewish) materialist spirit was universalized during the Reformation as the distinction (sustained within classical and Catholic traditions of thought) between the temporal and the spiritual was eroded or negated. (This critique of Rougier's, which clearly appeals to the Aryan ideal, is briefly discussed in Chapter 13.)

Whereas the notion of Jewish materialism would appear to be an unhappy and dangerous idea, other more worthy – and arguably more central – social and political notions are rooted in Rougier's interpretations of the history of religious thought.

In its early development, Christianity drew heavily on pagan sources (popular religion – the mysteries – rather than philosophy), but it introduced a new element which was (according to Rougier) utterly foreign to the religion of the Greeks and Romans: the notion of salvation being dependent on the acceptance of a certain number of propositions derived from divine revelation. This notion of an imposed orthodoxy Rougier unequivocally rejects (Rougier 1997, p. 44). This rejection and his general praise for the Hellenic spirit of toleration is in effect an early statement of Rougier's political liberalism.

The true theologians of Hellenism, Rougier points out (1997, p. 44), were the poets who acted as interpreters of popular beliefs. Indeed, everyone was free to interpret the myths in his own manner, says Rougier: 'chaque père de famille honorait les dieux à sa manière'. Though Julian had ambitions to do it, no Hellenic orthodoxy was ever promulgated:

En réalité, la religion consistait en une série de rites ancestraux et de cérémonies publiques dont on s'acquittait par civisme plutôt que par conviction religieuse et qui ne liait en rien le libre essor de la pensée. (Rougier 1997, p. 44)

[In reality, religion consisted in a series of ancestral rites and public ceremonies observed out of civic duty rather than religious conviction and which in no way inhibited the progress and freedom of thought.]

The development of positive science and a rational system of morality were the direct result of such liberty of thought (Rougier 1997, p. 45).

Rougier concludes his presentation of the intellectual contrasts between the Hellenists and Christians by some remarks on the conflict between science and religion, a conflict which he sees as commencing in the 2nd century with the formation of Christian dogma, and continuing to the present day. While recognizing the deficiencies of ancient science (such as its tendency to pure intellectualism) and ethics (its failure to grasp the irrational motives of human behaviour), he sees a continuity between the classical and modern scientific worldviews. Rougier sees the roots of the law of the conservation of energy in the Ionian principle of universal invariance (1997, p. 45). The general thrust of a rational morality leads to a rejection of retributive notions, and eventually to utilitarian methods of dealing with those who are psychologically maladapted

to social existence. The Christian notions of sin, punishment and redemption imply a savage, retributive view totally at odds with reason and rational morality. Celsus embodies this rational and scientific spirit in many ways, as has been pointed out. Two further putative achievements of Celsus may be noted here. He is presented as the initiator of scientific exegesis (Rougier 1997, p. 125); and as a pioneer of paleo-geology! Celsus's attack on the Mosaic cosmogony which grossly underestimates the age of the earth has been vindicated by modern discoveries (Rougier 1997, pp. 45-46).

But Rougier is not just concerned with the intellectual side of this conflict between Hellenism and Christianity: he devotes a chapter ('Les répugnances sentimentales') to the emotional challenges which Christianity posed to the Hellenic mind. In many ways these deeply felt cultural attitudes may be seen to be more fundamental than purely intellectual differences and difficulties.

Celsus was particularly concerned by the complaisance of Christians towards wrongdoers and the ignorant, a complaisance which challenged the scale of values of classical civilization (Rougier 1997, p. 47). Sin, for the classical mind, amounted to an unfortunate error of judgement which was of no great interest in itself but which lowered the standing of the offender in the eyes of the just. This attitude contrasts clearly with the attitude of Jesus as expressed in the parables of the woman taken in adultery, and the prodigal son, for example, and exemplified in his attitude towards Mary Magdalene. Rougier recognizes the fineness of this sentiment and sees that such attitudes reveal a generosity of nature not shared by those who pride themselves on not having transgressed. The Christian ideal is based on the idea that the human condition is in effect a fallen state, so that for salvation one must throw oneself on the mercy of God. Pride – a pagan virtue – is for the Christian the worst of sins. Celsus finds the notion that God favours the repentant sinner over someone who has not transgressed perverse and unjust. Celsus' religion is in accord with the ideals of the classical world: ideals of beauty, heroism, pride and self-possession.

Le Dieu de Celse est un dieu patricien, celui des âmes fières qu'on prie debout et le front haut, non le patron des misérables, le consolateur des affligés, qu'on implore avec des larmes d'extase au pied du crucifix dans la défaite de tout son être. (Rougier 1997, p. 48)

[The God of Celsus is a patrician god, a God of proud souls to whom one prays standing up with head held high, not the guide of the destitute, the consoler of the afflicted to whom one prays with tears of ecstasy and self abnegation at the foot of the crucifix.]

Rougier now shifts the focus of the discussion, associating the ideal exemplified by Celsus and his criticisms of Christianity with then current criticisms of Romanticism.

Celse et ses congénères stigmatisent dans le christianisme la même sensiblerie, la même falsification des valeurs que nous condamnons chez les romantiques. Ceux-ci ne s'apitoient rien tant que sur un beau crime passionnel ou sur la destinée d'une prostituée, comme si rien n'était plus digne d'intérêt que le cas de Rolla, la vie de la fille Elisa ou l'affaire Clémenceau. L'héroïne du grand roman de Rousseau, Julie, n'atteint un si haut degré de vertu que parce qu'elle a traversé l'amour coupable; elle est mise bien au-dessus de la princesse de Clèves, qui puise dans le souci de sa gloire l'orgueil de s'y refuser. (Rougier 1997, pp. 48-49)

[Celsus and his like accuse Christians of the same mawkish sentimentality, the same falsification of values, that we condemn in the Romantics. The latter are moved to pity by nothing so much as by a fine, passionate crime or by the fate of a prostitute, as if nothing were more worthy of interest than the case of Rolla, the life of the prostitute Elisa or the Clémenceau affair. Julie, the heroine of Rousseau's great novel, only attains such a high degree of virtue because she has experienced a culpable love; she is granted a moral status well above that of the Princesse de Clèves who, through pride in her good name and reputation, resisted temptation.]

In the manner of his previous concessions to Christianity, Rougier somewhat grudgingly admits that human weaknesses are often associated with generous natures and tenderness of heart (1997, p. 49). But even if admirable from the moral point of view, the moral sensibility of the early Christians – and by extension the Romantics – has a fatal flaw. As soon as it is applied to the conduct of life it threatens, by exalting the outcast and the dreamer, the public order. It is socially and politically deleterious.

Rougier's religious and ideological views here stand in direct contrast to those of Wittgenstein who was a Christian primitivist à la Tolstoy and who, as a soldier in the First World War had read and re-read Tolstoy's Christian tracts. Wittgenstein emulated the Russian by giving away his fortune. For Rougier, Tolstoy's example is instructive in a different way. It is a cautionary tale, showing that if the gospel is strictly followed the essential institutions of social existence will be undermined. It is a fact of history that the developing church saw the need to modify its principles, and Christianity only triumphed politically by eliminating its social romanticism and limiting its attempts to realize its evangelical utopia to the religious orders who operated outside

the realm of secular society (Rougier 1997, p. 49). This notion is often encountered in French conservative thought: Bertrand de Jouvenel, for example, has argued that communism is a fine, Christian idea, which unfortunately just doesn't work on a large scale, though it can work in controlled environments like monasteries.

Despite such ideological compromises, the church retained some distinctive and, as Rougier would have it, romantic elements. The romanticism of sin remained Christianity's supreme seduction.

Rougier's treatment of the psychology of sin is not without interest. Pleasures are magnified by the dangers associated with them. The intoxication of passionate love, enhanced by the thought of losing oneself eternally for an hour of forbidden pleasure, corresponds to the saint's hunger for humiliation, for degradation, for enduring every insult and affront for the glory of the celestial spouse (Rougier 1997, pp. 49-50). Teresa of Avila is psychologically identical to a great lady of the court and John of the Cross is compared to Don Juan. Women are particularly susceptible to the attraction of this type of mysticism.

En l'écartant du service divin, l'Eglise l'humilie, mais en l'éloignant parce que trop périlleuse, elle l'enorgueillit; en proclamant que sa chair n'est que corruption et cendre, elle porte défi à sa beauté; mais en faisant de son corps le vase d'élection du Seigneur et l'instrument coutumier de notre perdition, elle confère au don d'elle-même une valeur infinie. (Rougier 1997, p. 50)

[By excluding her from an active role in sacred ritual, the Church humiliates her; but by keeping her at a distance because of the dangers she represents, the Church feeds her pride. In proclaiming her flesh to be corruption and ashes, the Church challenges her beauty; but, in making her body [at once] the chosen vessel of the Lord and the chief instrument of perdition, it confers upon a woman's gift of herself infinite value.]

These notions led to the tradition of courtly love and eventually to the romantic defense of passion. The Church, by trying to restrict a woman's roles and lower her status, had succeeded only in putting her on a pedestal. An ancient, Rougier remarks (1997, p. 50), would be astonished at the central role that women and sex play in the modern consciousness. Spiritual voluptuousness, the fascination with sin and the divination of love are at the root of Christianity's power to enchant the soul. The effect of Rougier's analysis is not only to throw light on a key distinguishing feature of Christian culture, but also to demythologize and demystify a potent element in the modern, Western worldview.

The second area of Christian complaisance which Rougier discusses is the embracing of ignorance as a virtue. He sees the Christian notion of holy ignorance as being incompatible with the pagan sensibility, and, if one is happy to work with Rougier's selective and idealized image of Hellenism, this is plausible. Of course, in reality the pagan world was diverse, and included ideologies which involved an explicit rejection of the value of, for example, scientific knowledge, and sometimes an explicit rejection of all aristocratic values. The Cynics are a case in point. To raise such issues as objections to Rougier's thesis would be to misunderstand his purpose, however. This work, and indeed many of his writings on the classical heritage of the West, are not, and were not meant to be read as, works of pure scholarship. This is not to say his scholarship is shoddy; it is simply selective.

To suggest, then, that the ancients had a high regard for knowledge and that such a notion is essentially aristocratic, though something of a generalization, is not implausible. There are plenty of texts to attest to it. Plato and Aristotle affirm the primacy of the speculative life over the practical virtues, and this theme persists through to late paganism. It was taken up by Julian the Apostate (Rougier 1997, p. 51).

For this intellectual and aristocratic ideal of the sage contemplating eternal truths, Christianity substituted the moral and democratic ideal of the humble and pure of heart who are honoured for their charity and blind faith. This transvaluation of values derives from a combining of the Semitic idea of the transcendence of God with an exclusive preoccupation with eternal salvation. Rougier contrasts the views of Julian with those of St. Paul, Irenaeus, St. Augustine and Pascal. St. Paul and Pascal are quoted on the central importance of charity, Irenaeus and Augustine on the unimportance of intellectual knowledge. Augustine writes:

Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihil ne plus? Nihil omnino. (Rougier 1997, p. 51)

[I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing more? Absolutely nothing.]

Knowledge of the natural world doesn't help us understand the essence of God, and so the natural sciences are seen as a frivolous luxury, a product of vain curiosity. What God requires of us is not to penetrate his mysteries through the evidence of the senses and reason, but simply to have faith.

The psychology of the believer is the opposite of that of the savant; methodical doubt, upon which the scientific method is based, is incompatible with this notion of faith. Rougier returns to

the themes of his account of the Christian attitude to sex and sin when he remarks that the *Credo quia absurdum* expresses the gallant sentiment that doubt is an affront to love. True faith involves a complete abandonment of reason and the spirit of criticism (Rougier 1997, p. 52).

Though this experience of faith is open to all, it is more accessible to the simple and ignorant, as thinking people are more inclined to have doubts. Rougier (1997, p. 52) cites Jesus' warning that unless we become like little children we will not enter the kingdom of God. Needless to say, Celsus, who so values knowledge, and who sees it as the result of painstaking research and study by an intellectual elite, denounces such sentiments as arrogant and irresponsible. Rougier (1997, p. 53) cites not only Celsus' comments on this matter, but also similar remarks from Gaecilius, Porphyry, Julian and Rutilius Namatianus.

But, above all, Rougier appeals to Socrates and Plato, whose intellectual modesty and caution contrast with the extreme claims of the Christians. In the *Apology*, the character of Socrates endorses the essentially elitist view that the discovery of truth requires long meditations and patient researches. And Plato explicitly warns against imparting knowledge to the mass of the people, who lack the necessary sense of caution and modesty (Rougier 1997, p. 54).

By way of defending the pagan view against the suggestion that truth for the Greeks is merely a human truth, inferior to the supposedly higher truth of the Christians, Rougier notes that Socrates (in the *Apology*) made a clear distinction between a divine and a human wisdom, but, unlike the Christians, he did not claim to have a secure grasp of the former to which he nonetheless aspired.

The appeal to the sinner and the uneducated, highlighted by Celsus, constituted key elements in the success of Christianity in the propaganda war with pagan philosophy and religion (Rougier 1997, pp. 55-56). The pagan mystery religions – which also offered guarantees of salvation – refused initiation to criminals. Rougier (1997, p. 56) suggests that one of the factors which led Constantine to become Christian was that he believed that only they could absolve the murder of a son by his father. Nero (who murdered his mother, amongst others!) did not dare seek initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. Haunted by guilt in his last years, this great persecutor of Christians might, Rougier speculates, have himself become a Christian had he been more familiar with their doctrine (Rougier 1997, p. 56).

Christianity provided, as it were, a quick fix, a direct route to salvation forgoing the intellectual detours of, for example, neo-Platonism.

Ceux qui préfèrent la recherche à la découverte, l'effort à la satisfaction, les instincts de création aux instincts de possession, éprouveront le même malaise que Celse en présence d'une religion assurée de complaire toujours au grand nombre, en offrant la promesse d'une connaissance intégrale et d'une béatitude infinie au plus ignare, pourvu qu'il croie aveuglément, et au plus vil, pourvu qu'à l'instant où l'appellera la grâce de Dieu il se repente de son infamie. (Rougier 1997, p. 56)

[Those who prefer research to discovery, effort to satisfaction, the instincts of creation to the instincts of possession will experience the same unease as Celsus in the presence of a religion guaranteed always to accommodate itself to the mass of the people, offering the promise of complete knowledge and infinite happiness to the most ignorant, so long as they blindly believe, and to the most sinful, so long as they repent of their infamy when the grace of God calls them.]

Rougier (1997, pp. 57 ff.) argues that the Christians were persecuted under the Roman Empire not for religious but for political reasons – at least that was the perspective of the Roman authorities. Roman paganism was a polytheism without dogmas, an essentially tolerant and all-embracing syncretism which was able to incorporate into its framework a huge diversity of cults (Rougier 1997, p. 58). The Roman practice of incorporating the gods of conquered peoples into its national pantheon is well known. In return the conquered peoples were expected to maintain public order and to participate in the rituals associated with the imperial cult which was, above all, a civic religion designed to reinforce the authority of the state and the cohesion of the Empire.

Il [le culte impérial] visait à maintenir la cohésion de l'Empire, en remplaçant l'idéal absent de la patrie par la fidélité, promue à la dignité d'un sentiment religieux, à l'égard de l'empereur, envisagé non pas en tant qu'individu, mais en tant que personnifiant l'Empire, l'administration régulière, la justice, la concorde et la prospérité, c'est-à-dire un ensemble de sentiments permanents qui ne s'abolissaient pas parce qu'un homme mourait et qu'un autre prenait sa place. (Rougier 1997, p. 62)

[It [the imperial cult] sought to maintain the cohesion of the Empire by replacing the absent ideal of the fatherland by loyalty, promoted to the level of a religious sentiment, to the emperor – conceived not as an individual but as a personification of the Empire, good administration, justice, peace and prosperity – that is, to a body of permanent attitudes which would not be shaken because one man died and another took his place.]

It is one of Celsus' main ostensible purposes to convince Christians of the reasonableness of conforming to the imperial cult, and Rougier, who emphasizes the way the Church came eventually to incorporate into its own administration, beliefs and rituals many classical ideas and practices, clearly shares Celsus' view of the matter. (See Rougier (1997, pp. 66-67 and 73-74).) Bounoure (1986) sees anti-Semitism in Rougier's analysis of the early Christian persecutions: his analysis is taken as a coded attack on Jews of more recent times for provoking their own persecution, but Bounoure does not make a convincing case.⁴

Though Celsus unequivocally rejects the notion of evil spirits and so any suggestion of a Manichean-style dualism, there are some elements in his work which Rougier identifies as superstitious and inconsistent. As a philosopher, Celsus believes in the Greek notion of a providential universal order; but this is incompatible with his acceptance of the popular belief in daemons and the efficacy of prayer and sacrifices, and in miraculous cures and oracles (Rougier 1997, p. 70). Celsus lived at a time when two incompatible worldviews existed together, the one about to replace the other. Rougier's sympathy is very much with the optimistic, universal vision of Hellenism rather than with the darker vision which was then on the ascendant. He contrasts the two views thus:

... la conception optimiste de la sagesse antique, reposant sur l'idée de l'ordre providentiel du monde, conduisant à l'acceptation joyeuse, consentie par le sage, du Destin dont il a compris la souveraine raison ; la conception pessimiste des religions de salut, qui loin d'accepter l'ordre universel, le considère comme le résultat d'une faute initiale, d'une dégradation, dont on doit s'affranchir par la magie, les sacrifices, les sacrements, les purifications, la prière et l'ascèse... (Rougier 1997, pp. 70-71)

[... the optimistic conception of classical wisdom, resting on the idea of the providential order of the world, leading to joyous acceptance on the part of the sage of the Destiny of which he has understood the sovereign reason; the pessimistic conception of the religions of salvation, which, far from accepting the universal order, consider [the state of things to be] the result of an initial fault, of a fall, from which one can only free oneself by magic, sacrifices, sacraments, rites of purification, prayer and asceticism...]

Rougier recognizes, however, that Christianity in some respects transcends its dualistic elements, and in this respect is superior to paganism.⁵ Its great strength is its concept of God which is the God of the great prophets of Israel who doesn't demand sacrifices but rather seeks to be adored in spirit and in truth (Rougier, 1997, p. 78). He later sums up his view as follows:

La sagesse sans mystères de Platon était très supérieure à la théologie des Pères de l'Eglise; mais le paganisme des néo-platoniciens allié à la théurgie et à l'astrolâtrie orientale était très inférieur à une religion qui condamnait comme erroné le fatalisme astrologique et proscrivait comme démoniaques la magie et les oracles. (Rougier 1997, p. 161)

[The pure wisdom of Plato was much superior to the theology of the Fathers of the Church; but the paganism of the neo-Platonists, linked as it was to theurgy and oriental star-worship, was much inferior to a religion which condemned astrological fatalism as mistaken and proscribed magic and oracles as demonic.]

Rougier's pagan ideal – a purified, idealized paganism – is elaborated in the concluding section of the chapter on the political and social conflict between the early Christians and the pagan Empire.

Tel fut le crime décisif des chrétiens aux yeux de la société païenne: ils apparurent comme des "misanthropes", des ennemis du genre humain, des contempteurs obstinés de toutes les raisons, quotidiennes ou exceptionnelles, familières ou sublimes, de dire oui à la vie: les joies de la famille, l'amour de la patrie, l'honneur civique et la pudicité patricienne, les arts qui embellissent l'existence, les sciences qui sont l'honneur de l'esprit humain. La vie jusqu'alors était douce sous le regard clément des grands dieux salutaires. (Rougier 1997, p. 109)

[This was the decisive crime of the Christians in the eyes of pagan society: they appeared as misanthropes, enemies of the human race, obstinately contemptuous of all reasons, mundane or exceptional, familiar or sublime, for saying yes to life: joys of family life, love of native land, civic honour and patrician dignity, the arts which embellish existence, the sciences which are the glory of the human mind. Life until then was sweet under the clement regard of the great, life-enhancing gods.]

It is clear that Rougier is not primarily interested here in making an historical claim. (Life was hardly sweet for the vast majority in late pagan society.) His perspective is not sociological but ideological. He is presenting a vision of life which he finds exemplified in classical authors and specifically in the work of Celsus, but which he elaborates considerably. Political myth, ideology and religion may draw on history but their purpose is practical, their focus is the present. Indeed, Rougier's preoccupations in *Celse* are representative of an important strand of

20th century European culture, comprising a far broader spectrum than that represented by the New Right in France (which drew directly on his ideas).⁶

Alluding to an idea made much of later in the century by the English poet, Robert Graves, Rougier describes the looming transvaluation of values which was about to undermine the pagan world:

Bientôt la sainte volupté sera proscrite, la toute-puissante, l'irrésistible, la souveraine des dieux et la maîtresse des hommes. (Rougier 1997, p. 109)

[Soon holy voluptuousness will be proscribed, the all-powerful, irresistible ruler of the gods and mistress of men.]

He is invoking here the White Goddess. Under the forms of Cybele, the Syrian mother goddess of wild nature, and Artemis of the Ephesians, the life-giver, she is being farewelled. And her departure symbolizes a profound change in the cultural landscape. Rougier's depiction of the change is both vivid and moving.

Il n'y aura plus de travail profitable que la prière, de vertu efficace que la stérile continence, de dignité éminente que la mendicité. Toute la table ancienne des valeurs civilisatrices sera bouleversée: mieux vaut le pauvre que le riche, le pécheur repentant que le juste irréprochable, l'homme de rien que le maître de ce monde, celui qui s'afflige que celui qui se réjouit, le simple d'esprit que le docte, Jésus, "le plus laid des enfants des hommes", que Dionysos, "le plus beau des fils des dieux", la sombre folie "du sophiste crucifié" que la religion de "la très sage Athènes". Les puissances des cieux et de la terre, ces infatigables ouvriers "qui tissent sur le métier du temps la robe vivante de la Divinité", les dieux du paganisme, dont chacun incarnait un aspect esthétique du cosmos, se transformeront en démons irrités, tourmentant les âmes, peuplant d'effroyables sabbats, préparant la dramaturgie de terrifiantes apocalypses. L'Empire menacé, bien peu songeront à la résistance. L'art, la science, toutes les lumières de la culture, toutes les illustrations de l'esprit disparaîtront sous la rafale des Barbares, les fléaux de Dieu; et, avec le dernier encens brûlé sur un autel de gazon devant un arbre enrubanné, s'en ira la candeur de vivre. (Rougier 1997, p. 109)

[Henceforth the only profitable work will be prayer, the only virtue, sterile abstinence, mendicity the only eminent dignity. The whole scale of civilising values will be

overturned: better to be poor than rich, repentant sinner than upright and just, man of nothing rather than master of this world, afflicted rather than rejoicing, simple rather than learned, Jesus, "the most ugly of the children of men", rather than Dionysus, "the most handsome of the sons of the gods"; better the dark madness of the "crucified sophist" than the religion of "most wise Athena". The powers of heaven and earth, those indefatigable toilers "who weave on the loom of time the living robe of Divinity", the gods of paganism, each of whom embodies an aesthetic aspect of the cosmos, will be transformed into angry demons tormenting souls, filling the Thebaid of the solitaries with infernal snares, besieging cities, conducting dreadful sabbats, plotting terrifying apocalypses. Though the Empire is threatened, few will think of resistance. Art, science, all the lights of culture, all manifestations of the mind will disappear under the onslaught of the barbarians, the scourge of God; and, with the last incense burnt on an altar of turf before a beribboned tree, the innocence of existence will depart.]

But all was not lost.

... [L]e paganisme ne périra pas à jamais. Une nostalgie confuse des dieux de la jeunesse et de la joie traverse les songes difformes du Moyen Age. (Rougier 1997, p. 109)

[Paganism will not perish forever. A confused nostalgia for the gods of youth and joy permeates the distorted dreams of the Middle Ages.]

Rougier enumerates some of the pagan survivals (such as nymphs reborn as fairies), but it was only with the Renaissance that paganism was reborn in its full glory (1997, pp. 109-110).

Before looking in more detail at his view of the Renaissance, it is worth noting that Rougier's presentation of the Middle Ages in *Celse* as a world of darkness, fear and distorted dreams contrasts with later views. Twenty years on, reflecting his more positive attitude towards Christianity, Rougier gives a somewhat different picture of the Middle Ages. In his *La France en marbre blanc* (1946) he wrote of the spiritual unity of medieval Europe for which the Church was responsible:

Cette unité repose sur une foi commune, la foi en l'ordre divin corrigeant les désordres terrestres d'un monde semi-barbare; sur une langue commune, le latin; sur une élite recrutée dans toutes les classes de la société et dans tous les pays, les gens de l'Eglise,

réguliers et séculaires; sur un même idéal, l'idéal évangélique de justice, de charité et de paix. (Rougier 1946, p. 79)

[This unity rests on a common faith in a divine order correcting the earthly disorders of a semi-barbarian world; on a common language, Latin; on an elite recruited from all social classes and all countries, churchmen, regular and secular; on a shared ideal, the evangelical ideal of justice, charity and peace.]

But there is more continuity in Rougier's social and religious thought than discontinuity. He reasserts in *La France en marbre blanc* his love for the Renaissance, which did not destroy the 'marvellous edifice' of the Christian Middle Ages; rather, it was the Reformation which destroyed it (Rougier 1946, pp. 79-80). Also, more importantly, the notion of the divine order, which he highlights as an essential feature of medieval Christendom, may be seen to be identical to the divine order to which the Stoics and Platonists had appealed.

It should be emphasized that Rougier's concern with matters aesthetic and religious is always intimately bound up with the social and political aspects of life ('la vie civile'); indeed, as is evident from his work on Celsus, the former gain their significance by being symbols of the latter.

La Renaissance fut, avec une reprise de la vie civile, une explosion de joie de vivre symbolisée par la résurrection des dieux de la Grèce. Aphrodite renaît sous le pinceau de Botticelli, gauche et frileuse encore dans la torsade de ses cheveux d'or, du long sommeil et du grand froid du Moyen Age. Marsile Ficin prêche Platon dans l'église Degli Angeli à Florence... (Rougier 1997, p. 110)

[The Renaissance was, with its renewal of civil life, an explosion of *joie de vivre* symbolized by the resurrection of the gods of Greece. Aphrodite is reborn under the brush of Botticelli with her twisted golden hair, awkward and shivery still from the long sleep and the great chill of the Middle Ages. Marsilio Ficino preaches Plato in Florence's Church of the Angels...]

Rougier celebrates the pagan spirit of the art and culture of Renaissance Italy: papal Rome, the Florence of the Medicis, Venice. Renaissance Italy is clearly a touchstone for him. Earlier in this work (1997, p. 59), in describing the religious context of late paganism, he had compared its extravagant syncretism with the religion of the neo-Platonists of 15th century Florence.

The Renaissance theme is a constant of Rougier's oeuvre. Reference has already been made to *La France en marbre blanc* (1946). And the article, 'La réforme et le capitalisme' (Rougier 1928), which was alluded to above, also includes some interesting comments on Renaissance versus Reformation values. According to Rougier, the qualitative civilization represented by the Venice of the Doges, the Florence of Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Rome of the humanistic Popes scandalized the Reformers, and continues to scandalize their contemporary equivalents. The author is drawing heavily on the ideas of Guglielmo Ferrero in this article, and, unsurprisingly, he comes down clearly on the side of Renaissance values, rather than the values (as he, and Ferrero, see them) of the Reformation and modern America: wealth, productive industry and Puritan morality (Rougier 1928, p. 921).

As ever, Renan is cited:

"... [L]' homme n'est pas ici-bas seulement pour être heureux, il n'y est même pas pour être simplement honnête. Il y est aussi pour réaliser ces formes supérieures de la vie que sont le grand art et la culture désintéressée." (Rougier 1928, p. 920)

["Man does not fulfil his destiny by being happy, nor even by simple goodness. For he must also realize the superior forms of life which are great art and disinterested culture."]

In *Celse contre les chrétiens* and numerous other works, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation are seen to represent a retreat from these values. But, just as the values of the classical world survived the collapse of Roman civilization, so the values of the Renaissance survive.

Rougier ends his paeon to paganism in *Celse* by affirming the continuing relevance of the classical and Renaissance vision.

... [L]es lettres séculières remises en honneur et les monuments de l'Antiquité exhumés demeureront, pour donner aux hommes une éternelle leçon de sagesse. Ils se rencontreront sur les chemins de l'Italie et de la Grèce, la terre des voluptés fécondes et des sérénités éternelles, tous les anxieux de la beauté, tous les fervents de la lumière. Goethe, à la vue des chefs-d'oeuvre de la plastique antique, trouvera la guérison de son romantisme et bannira tout mal de vivre. Renan, sur l'Acropole, confessera ses erreurs passées et ne voudra plus servir d'autre déesse qu'Athéna, dont "le culte signifie raison et sagesse". Inlassablement, la mythologie des poètes charmera le coeur des jeunes

générations comme le meilleur trésor que les hommes aient encore inventé pour se garder l'âme fleurie. (Rougier 1997, pp. 110-111)

[The literature, restored and respected, and the excavated monuments of antiquity will remain to give to men an eternal lesson in wisdom. Traveling the roads of Italy and Greece, lands of fruitful voluptuousness and eternal serenities, they will experience all the pangs of beauty, all the passion of enlightenment. The sight of the masterpieces of classical sculpture will cure Goethe of his Romanticism and banish all depression. Renan, on the Acropolis, will confess his past errors, devoting himself henceforth solely to Athena whose cult "stands for reason and wisdom". The mythology of the poets, a creation unsurpassed in its ability to refresh the soul, will lose none of its power to charm the hearts of new generations.]

Though Rougier may not have expressed himself in quite these terms in later life, there is no reason to believe that he ever renounced his Hellenism. His rhetoric will not be to everyone's taste, but it is undeniable that much of the writing has real power and resonance. There is no doubt that the beliefs and attitudes expressed with such passion in *Celsus contre les chrétiens* were deeply felt, and were a source and inspiration for much of Rougier's intellectual, cultural and political work.

¹ Because of the literary nature of the work under discussion, because the style is an integral and essential part of it, I have quoted (and translated) relatively longer extracts in this than in some other chapters. However, I have not attempted a literary analysis of the work; the style is interesting more for what it reveals about the attitudes of the author than for any intrinsic literary reasons, I think.

² I refer to the 1997 edition of the work which has a useful introduction by Alain de Benoist.

³ Note the careful phrasing. Rougier was quite aware that any identification of these two figures was a matter of some controversy.

⁴ There is some discussion of Bounoure's tendentious portrait of Rougier in Chapters 9 and 10.

⁵ It will be recalled also that Rougier – in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, p. 41) – saw some truth (albeit metaphorical) in the myth of original sin, and rejected the notion of the natural goodness of humanity.

⁶ The course of this pagan (or post-Christian) and (in spirit) aristocratic tradition may be traced in literature and film. Ironically, however, Rougier's subsequent trajectory was such as to separate him from most of these cultural developments. Even the New Right was uncomfortable with aspects of his later thought, notably his interest in reviewing the Pétain trial, and his Christian sympathies. 'Ce furent les premiers écrits de Rougier qui fournirent les thèmes de propagande en même temps que le cadre de pensée du GRECE...' (Bounoure 1987, p. 165). See Chapter 12.

Chapter 5

The astral religion of the Pythagoreans

Rougier's work on the purportedly Pythagorean notion of astral immortality – first published in the early 1930s – may be seen to develop themes implicit in his previous works on religious and intellectual history. An ideological dimension is again evident.

In *La scolastique et le thomisme*, Rougier had presented scholasticism as essentially a development of Greek rationalism, albeit that during the medieval period the empirical spirit of science was suppressed, and reason was constrained by dogmatic imperatives. The major theme of the work is the interplay between reason and Christian doctrine. In his Pythagorean work, Rougier again analyses the subtle interplay between rationalistic and religious thought, but this time, because Greek religion was less dogmatic than Christianity, the interplay was much freer and more fruitful, involving empirical science as well as reason.

La religion astrale des pythagoriciens (1959)¹ also exhibits a clear continuity with some of the central themes of *Celse contre les chrétiens*. In both cases, pagan culture is presented sympathetically, and its essential tolerance and openness to science and reason is emphasized. Though the Hellenism evident in the later work is more constrained and intellectualized than was the case in the earlier work, one should not underestimate the aesthetic attraction exerted on the author by the bold eschatological and astronomical speculations under discussion.

Curiously, Rougier's fairly modest contribution to Pythagorean studies seems to have made more of an impact on the scholarly community than did his more extensive studies in epistemology and logic. Ioan Petru Culianu (1983 and 1987) fills in the background of the scholarly debate which Rougier was joining by writing on the subject he did, and so helps to put his contribution in context.

Culianu notes that astral immortality was featured by Plato as a possibility of posthumous reward. The idea was embraced by some of his disciples.

Later, mythology and science converged towards impressive representations like those of the eschatological myths of Plutarch (c. 46 – c. 119 CE). (Culianu 1987, p. 345)

Much debate centres on the sources of these ideas and their manner of transmission. One school supports the view that they can be ascribed to an uninterrupted Pythagorean tradition. Rougier is described as 'the most prominent representative' of this school, defending what Culianu calls 'the Pythagorean thesis' against the 'Oriental thesis' favored by Franz Cumont and the German *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Culianu 1987, p. 345).

The German *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which argued for Iranian or 'iranized Babylonian' (Culianu 1983, p. 22) origins of the doctrine of the soul's heavenly journey and Gnostic dualism in general, had its roots in the late 19th century. Culianu traces its sources (1983, pp. 16 ff.) and arguments, and makes a negative judgement concerning its plausibility.

No matter what the true origin of Gnostic dualism actually is, one thing is certain: that the theory of the Iranian background of Gnosticism has no chance of survival either on the merely phenomenological or on the historical plane. (Culianu 1983, p. 21)

Culianu is equally skeptical of the Pythagorean thesis, which was very much in vogue in France during the first half of the 20th century. A. Delatte's *Etudes sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (1915) was a seminal work. G. Méautis, another representative of this school, is severely criticized by Culianu. His

... interpretations are not entirely scientific. The author enjoys esoteric allusions, speaks as from one initiate to another, and has a patent nostalgia for secret societies. His basic, somewhat ingenuous, idea, is that of a continuity of a Pythagorean doctrine down to Free Masonry and Theosophy. He often quotes from authors such as Rudyard Kipling and even from Mme Blavatsky, taking however, every possible caution not to compromise himself. (Culianu 1983, p. 27)

But the naive Méautis was not the only inheritor of Delatte's ideas. The Pythagorean school became and remained influential in France 'through representatives like L. Rougier, P. Boyancé, G. Soury and M. Detienne' (Culianu 1983, p. 27).

Like Delatte Rougier believed that the doctrine of reincarnation or metempsychosis was Pythagorean; like Méautis, he thought that the purification of the soul in a sublunar purgatory had a Pythagorean origin. (Culianu 1983, p. 28)²

It should be noted that Delatte's views, though rejected by Culianu, have been defended by reputable scholars. C.J. de Vogel dedicated his *Pythagoras and early Pythagoreanism* (1966) to A. Delatte (amongst others), and the work affirms the fundamental importance of Delatte's early studies, and argues for a high degree of continuity in the traditions of the Pythagorean Society (1966, pp. 2, 11). J. A. Philip argues that, while the Pythagorean tradition evolved from the 4th century B.C. (first written form) until the 5th century A.D., it maintained continuity.

The developments in Pythagorean doctrine are not as radical as those we observe in the early church. (Philip 1966, p. 8)

Obviously, such controversies cannot be dealt with thoroughly here, but it is clear that Delatte's thesis had (and probably still has) its supporters. Perhaps, after all, the debate turns on a matter of degree, a matter of emphasis. It is to some extent a matter of taste whether one emphasizes continuities or discontinuities.

And, of course, the views of Rougier are not identical with Delatte's. Though his work fits neatly into the framework of interpretation offered by Delatte, and though he may be seen to assume a relatively continuous Pythagorean tradition, Rougier never makes extravagant claims regarding the continuity of that tradition. Nor can he be accused of ignorance or naiveté, insofar as he was certainly aware of alternative views, such as Cumont's 'oriental thesis'.³

But perhaps what distinguishes Rougier most of all from the majority of scholars working in the area is that he sought to emphasize the crucial relevance of scientific issues for questions of religious history. The central theme of his work is that Greek astronomical advances led to the rehabilitation of the notion that there exists a fundamental distinction between the higher (celestial) world and the sublunary world.

Rougier opens the body of *La religion astrale* by describing the intellectual forces which were undermining traditional religion in 5th century Greece. Philosophers had provided rational explanations of traditional religious myth and, more importantly, Milesian physics, affirming the principle of the substantial unity of the world, sought rational and natural explanations for all physical phenomena, including life and the celestial realm (Rougier 1959, p. 12). Rougier describes the instrumentalist response of certain Greek and later philosophers who disapproved of this naturalistic trend (1959, pp. 17 ff.). Astronomy was a legitimate science only in so far as it was studied for practical purposes, relating to navigation or correcting the calendar, for instance. If studied for the sake of understanding the natural world, however, astronomy was morally dangerous because it would distract from the quest for self-knowledge and encourage

arrogance and atheism. Rougier sees many Christian thinkers, such as Pascal and Bossuet, as the successors of Socrates in this regard.

Ironically, the scientific advances of the Pythagoreans appeared to vindicate the traditional view that the sublunary and celestial worlds were fundamentally different, and to undermine the radical and disturbing assumptions of Milesian physics. If it was the case that the sun and the planets were not moving erratically but according to obscure but strict and regular geometrical principles, then the case for the sanctity of the celestial realm was much strengthened.

Rougier argues strongly for the superiority of Pythagorean (and, more generally, Greek) astronomy over Babylonian astronomy. While Babylonian astronomy remained descriptive, the Pythagoreans discovered that the apparently complex and arbitrary movements of the planets could be explained by postulating a small number of simple, regular, circular movements in a non-coplanar universe. The planets and the fixed stars were not, as the Babylonians believed, on the same plane (Rougier 1959, p. 27). The universe was thus expanded, and reason was utilized to transcend mere description and to reveal the realities behind misleading appearances. The Babylonians failed to realize that the problems of astronomy were essentially problems of geometry; they did not seek to explain or interpret in a scientific sense.

Rougier's method is to try to enter into the thought-world of the Pythagoreans, addressing and exploring the problems that Pythagorean thinkers raised and the solutions offered, a dialectic which involved a constant interplay between scientific and religious notions. According to Rougier, the notion of the divine character and the celestial origin of souls led the Pythagoreans to pose for themselves a series of problems which they sought to answer in the context of their new astronomy:

[P]ourquoi les âmes, d'essence céleste, sont-elles engagées dans "le cercle de la génération" de ce monde sublunaire? Comment s'opèrent leur incorporation et leurs réincarnations successives? Comment l'âme, récupérant "ses ailes" perdue dans sa chute cosmique, parvient-elle à s'évader de la prison du corps? Quel itinéraire suit-elle du ciel à la terre et quelles sont les étapes successives du "retour à son astre"? (Rougier 1959, p. 2)

[Why is it that souls, whose essence is celestial, are involved in the "cycle of generation" of this sublunary world? What are the mechanisms of their incarnation and their successive reincarnations? How does the soul succeed in escaping from the prison

of the body, and recover the "wings" it lost during its cosmic fall? What route does it take from heaven to earth, and what are the successive stages of the "return to its star"?)

The solutions offered to these and similar problems by the Pythagorean astronomers engendered, according to Rougier, the astral religion of the antique world.

The celestial/sublunary dualism implicit in their worldview was as much a scientific as a religious notion. It was based on a comprehensive theory of nature. Astral bodies were believed to be made of incorruptible fire or aether, earthly bodies were mixtures of the four elements and thus corruptible. The soul, being a celestial body, would naturally return to its origin after the death of the physical body. (See Rougier (1959, pp. 61 ff.))

Religion, then, does not exist in its own non-scientific world: scientific and religious developments are intimately related. The framework of the astral religion of antiquity is in some sense a product of science, and it was ultimately dissolved, not by competing religions so much as by the progress of science, its progenitor. What saw to the demise of this faith of the Mediterranean elites was not a competing religion, and certainly not Christianity. Indeed, many elements of astral religion became central components of medieval Christianity. It was the astronomical and scientific work of Kepler, Galileo and Newton which finally led to the demise of this tradition (Rougier 1959, p. 3).

How different, in fact, were the views of Rougier and Cumont? 'According to common opinion,' writes Culianu (1983, p. 28), 'F. Cumont's views were particularly different from Rougier's.'⁴ This general perception derived from the fact that Cumont had criticized Rougier's work of 1932, and Rougier's arrangement – referred to above – of the bibliography of his 1959 work confirms that he, to some extent, shares the perception.

Nonetheless, the two have much in common, both personally and intellectually.⁵ It is abundantly clear that Rougier's work on the astral religion of the Pythagoreans owes much to Cumont's researches in the area. Much of the basic religious data upon which Rougier's work is based can be found in Cumont's *After life in Roman paganism*, a book based on a series of lectures given at Yale University and first published in 1922.⁶

Even Rougier's interest in the links between the science of astronomy and religion may be seen to have been inspired by Cumont, for whom this was an abiding preoccupation. For example,

Cumont argued that the discovery by Chaldean and Greek astronomers that the sun plays a central role in determining the movement of the planets, taken with the realization that the moon glows with reflected light, helped pave the way for the dominance of sun cults in the late pagan world (Cumont 1960, pp. 70 ff.). Previously the moon had been given precedence. The pattern of this argument is similar to Rougier's in his works on the astral religion of the Pythagoreans, even if the substance and general orientation is different.

It might also be noted that Festugière, to whom Rougier appeals against Cumont's oriental thesis, was known as a devoted disciple of Cumont.

Undeniably, Cumont and Rougier were in agreement at many points. Both believed that a Pythagorean tradition continued into late antiquity, forming (with Platonism, Stoicism and other traditions) an important element in the religious syncretism of the time.

Culianu (1983, p. 28) accepts that 'the divergence between the two scholars was not as great as it seemed'. Like Rougier, Cumont was convinced that 'Pythagoras and his followers were the authors of a "scientific revolution" within the Greek world' (Culianu 1983, p. 28). He also accepted that Pythagoreanism included notions of celestial eschatology etc., but he diverged from Rougier in seeing these doctrines as having been taken by the Pythagoreans from the Chaldeans (Iranian Magi settled in Mesopotamia and then in Asia Minor).

For Cumont, Rougier's theory was certainly pertinent, but only within the borders of Greek and Roman culture. (Culianu 1983, p. 28)

Cumont was indebted, then, 'both to the German "religionsgeschichtliche Schule" and to the French "Pythagorean school", with a preference for the former' (Culianu 1983, p. 29). Given that Cumont's chief interest was in oriental religions (his reputation was built on his pioneering work on Mithraism), it is perhaps not surprising that he emphasizes the significance of oriental influences.

Rougier, on the other hand, emphasizes the originality of the Pythagorean tradition and discontinuities with Babylonian astrology, which was concerned merely to describe and predict rather than to explain in a scientific or rationalistic sense. The eschatological views of the Pythagoreans flowed naturally from the conclusions of their theoretical and geometricalized astronomy.

According to Culianu, the 'most radical criticism of Rougier came from W. Burkert in the early sixties' (1983, p. 29). A revised English-language version was published some ten years later, as Burkert (1972). Given Culianu's claim, any assessment of Rougier's work in this area would be incomplete without an examination of Burkert's book. Does it in fact contain convincing arguments against Rougier's position? Does it undermine Rougier's credibility as an historian of Greek religion and science?

It is clear that Burkert's thesis is polemical and has a central theme which puts him at odds with the standard view – which was also Rougier's view – of Pythagoras as a religious figure who was also a key figure in the development of rational science. For his key thesis is that

... Pythagoras represents not the origin of the new, but the survival or revival of ancient, pre-scientific lore, based on superhuman authority and expressed in ritual obligation. The lore of number is multifarious and changeable. (Burkert 1972, p. iii)

According to Burkert, elements of rational science had mixed with Pythagorean elements, eventually becoming dominant; and these innovative elements were retrospectively – and wrongly – ascribed to Pythagoras and the early Pythagoreans.⁷

Burkert criticizes Rougier for his interpretation of both religious and scientific history but, if one looks past the rhetoric – he speaks at one point of a 'dangerous simplification' – the differences are not as radical as Culianu suggests. On the level of purely religious history, Burkert emphasizes that 'there are present from the very beginning a large number of overlapping and contradictory themes' and that notions of celestial immortality coexisted with early Greek notions of the underworld.

The association of the gods and sky is primeval and seems self-evident. (Burkert 1972, p. 359)

Burkert (1972, pp. 358 ff.) analyses a range of sources which suggest a complex interweaving of ideas, Pythagorean and non-Pythagorean, in the development of notions of astral immortality. He accepts that astronomical advances led to a need to revise notions of the afterlife, and that this revision led to a general acceptance of the notion of celestial immortality.

In general, the idea finally prevailed that the Beyond is in the realm of stars... (Burkert 1972, p. 358)

These ideas are common to Cumont and Rougier, both of whom are cited. Burkert notes the division between Cumont's emphasis on oriental origins, and Rougier's (and Boyancé's) emphasis on Greek sources, but he does not take an explicit position on this issue.

So it is not his views on the purely religious or mythic traditions which put him at odds with Rougier, or even the view that scientific advances were decisive in changing people's views of the afterlife in the Greek world: it is rather a difference on the timing of the scientific advances.

Burkert rejects outright Rougier's contention that the discovery of mathematical physics was due to Pythagoras. According to Rougier,

... Pythagoras' discovery of the contrary movement of the sun through the zodiac meant that the movement of one of the so-called planets had been seen as perfectly circular, and the mathematical arrangement of celestial phenomena recognized. As 'conséquences religieuses' [...] of this came the doctrines of the presence of souls in the stars, and of their divinity, of the relationship between the stars and the soul, because of their eternal movement, of the dualism of heavenly order and terrestrial confusion; and the reflections of these doctrines in Alcmaeon prove, Rougier thinks, that their originator was Pythagoras. (Burkert 1972, p. 358)

In response to this, Burkert argues that the movement of the sun is more regular than that of the planets, and that, unlike the planets, the sun was seen as 'a paradigm of cosmic order' (1972, p. 358). But Burkert's argument is misleading. He writes:

[The sun's] movement with respect to the zodiac was already known to Cleostratus, to say nothing of the Babylonians... (1972, p. 358)

But, for Rougier, it was not the apparent movement which was at issue, but an application of mathematics to the data to reveal hidden order. This new mode of explanation is Rougier's focus, and it was in fact a Greek development. Even Burkert accepts that 'the Greek mathematical theory of planetary motion' was 'a tremendous achievement' (1972, p. 335). He differs from Rougier in seeing the decisive advances as occurring with Eudoxus rather than with the Pythagoreans who influenced Plato.

Though Burkert rejects Rougier's notion of a Pythagorean astronomical revolution, he acknowledges Rougier's caution regarding his substantive claims for Pythagorean astronomy.

Rougier stopped short, rightly, of ascribing to the Pythagoreans a mathematical theory of the actual movements of the planets. (Burkert 1972, p. 358)

In this regard, Rougier recognizes the originality of Eudoxus 'though he does put forward the vague suggestion that the Pythagoreans may have tried the same kind of explanation [as Eudoxus] for the other planets' (Burkert 1972, p. 358).

In attacking Rougier's guarded speculations, Burkert falls into dogmatism. For Burkert, Eudoxus is the source of astronomical innovation in respect of planetary movement, and his theory owes nothing to Pythagoras or the early Pythagoreans. Given the remarkable nature of Eudoxus' attempt to explain the movements of the planets in a mathematical way – Burkert himself calls it 'an astounding achievement' (1972, p. 323) – it seems unwise to rule out the possibility of previous attempts in a similar mode, and the possibility of significant debts to previous thinkers, Pythagorean or otherwise.

In broad outline, Burkert's view of the interplay of science and religion is not dissimilar to Rougier's, though he steadfastly refuses to credit a Pythagorean tradition with any astronomical advances. The idea of astral immortality 'only gradually developed into a system apparently built on a scientific basis' (Burkert 1972, p. 368). Scientific discoveries – the spherical earth and Eudoxus' theory of the orderly character of planetary movement – led to the fading of a belief in a subterranean Hades and the contrast of celestial order with earthly imperfection.

This was the path that led to that synthesis of astronomy and religion which we find in the later Plato, in Heraclides, Aristotle and Zenocrates; we cannot simply call it "Pythagorean." This doctrine then, taking its departure from Plato and Aristotle, finally became canonical. The agreement of science and religion, emphasized by the Stoics, obviously made a tremendous impression on the Romans. (Burkert 1972, p. 368)

Rougier's work deals with this 'canonical' doctrine. There is a real tradition here, but its sources, it must be admitted, remain obscure. If it can be traced to an ancient Pythagorean tradition, then the label "Pythagorean" may be justified. If not, the label, although traditional, is misleading.

Oddly, some comments in Burkert's introduction to *Lore and science* (1972) seem to undermine the unequivocal rejection of Rougier's Pythagorean thesis in the body of the work. Burkert recognizes that the views of reputable scholars on key issues in Pythagorean studies have varied

immensely over the past 150 years, and it seems quite plain that academic fashion and ideology have played a significant part in the process. Burkert's point of departure in surveying the most important attitudes and trends in modern Pythagorean scholarship is the work of the German 19th century scholar Eduard Zeller, who was extremely skeptical about a Pythagorean tradition, seeing Pythagoras merely as a founder of a religious society and teacher of transmigration. John Burnet – whom, incidentally, Bertrand Russell draws on heavily in his *History of Western philosophy* – put forward an alternative view which saw Pythagoras as a scientific as well as a religious innovator: '... Pythagoras had not only a number theory but an astronomical system' (Burkert 1972, p. 4). Burkert, whose own view seems to derive from the skeptical tradition initiated by Zeller, admits that Zeller had been too hasty in rejecting the later tradition (on which Burnet and Cumont and Rougier relied) (1972, p. 4).

Burkert admits in the introduction that 'it is generally taken as proved that Plato owed his scientific knowledge to the Pythagoreans, especially in the realm of astronomy' (1972, p. 6). He goes further: though detailed reconstructions of Pythagorean mathematics cannot be definitely attributed to Pythagoras himself, they 'seem to lead back almost as far as his era' (1972, p. 6).

Burkert recognizes a growing tendency amongst scholars to put a higher valuation on the later tradition. For example, Cumont made extensive use of Pythagorean tradition in the interpretation of funerary symbolism of the imperial period.

From this point of view there was no difference discernible between early and late Pythagoreanism; it was rather as though a powerful and continuous stream flowed from an ancient source. The numerous studies of Pierre Boyancé also follow this tendency; their aim is to grasp the "origine pythagoricienne" behind the late material. (Burkert 1972, p. 6)

But the effect of the proliferation of conflicting theories is to call into question even the possibility of consensus. In the wake of doubts even about the reliability of Aristotle's data '... it seems that the last vestige of a possible consensus has disappeared, and it is no wonder if resignation spreads' (Burkert 1972, p. 9). 'The material,' writes Burkert,

... seems to fall into the pattern each enquirer is looking for. The historian of science rediscovers Pythagoras the scientist; the religiously minded show us Pythagoras the mystic; [...] the anthropologist finds "shamanism"; and the philological scholar may play off against one another the contradictions of the tradition, so that critical virtuosity may sparkle over a bog of uncertainty. (1972, p. 9)

In the light of this despairing judgement from a scholar who devoted much of his life to Pythagoras scholarship, perhaps Rougier did well not to revisit in any serious way the issues he dealt with so deftly in his early monograph.⁸

Burkert's comments also bring to the fore the broader ideological issues which inevitably attach to these areas of classical scholarship. In this regard, Rougier's Pythagorean thesis is very much in accord with his belief in the unique significance of the classical and Greek heritage, a view which has not only cultural but also political implications.

Burkert is highly critical of some Italian scholars who embraced the Italian school of Pythagoras as their own, and crudely incorporated their Pythagorean scholarship into an integral nationalism. An example he cites is Vincenzo Capparelli, in whose 'bulky' works 'chauvinistic enthusiasm for Pythagoras runs riot' (1972, p. 7). It is a little worrying that Rougier gives Capparelli's works a favorable mention in the brief bibliographical notes appended to *La religion astrale* (1959). Though it would be a mistake to make much of this, as he appears not to have drawn on Capparelli in any significant way, it may, perhaps, be an indication that Rougier's thesis, though modestly presented and argued for in a sober and responsible fashion, found its original motivation in a broader, cultural, even ideological, commitment to Hellenism, to the intellectualist values of the Greek tradition of science and philosophy.

Culianu, who identified Burkert as Rougier's most radical critic, has mounted his own detailed attack on the Pythagorean thesis, claiming to show that the hypothesis of Pythagorean influences on Plutarch's myths is ill-founded, a mere expedient. In reality, these myths reflected more general archaic mental patterns.

Plutarch depended, on one hand, on Plato, and on the other hand, on a popular tradition which was "Pythagorean" only in so far as Pythagoreanism itself had absorbed and interpreted it. (Culianu 1983, p. 29)

Culianu – who wrote the article on astral immortality for the prestigious *Encyclopedia of religion* – clearly rejects, then, both Cumont's and Rougier's interpretations; in particular, Cumont's views on Iranian origins, and Rougier's and Cumont's belief in a Pythagorean tradition which continued into late antiquity. He nonetheless treats both scholars with respect.

It is impossible to come to firm conclusions – at least in the context of the present work – about these scholastic controversies, but, even if he is guilty of a degree of oversimplification, it

would seem that Rougier's contributions to debates regarding astral immortality were not insignificant. Unlike many specialist historians of religion, he emphasized the scientific elements in the Pythagorean tradition, and so helped to broaden the scope of the debate beyond the bounds of religious history. His basic thesis concerning the subtle interplay between science and religion in the classical Greek world appears not to have been effectively contraverted, and indeed is confirmed in broad outline even by his critics. His ideas on the nature of the early Pythagorean tradition are at least plausible, though he may be accused of giving excessive credence to the tradition which classed the 'canonical' doctrine described by Burkert simply as 'Pythagorean'.

Rougier's attitude to this canonical doctrine (whatever its sources) and its impressive synthesis of scientific and religious elements is a complex one. He clearly espouses many of the values (e.g. the high status granted to rationality) implicit in it, and was moved by its beauty. The fact that this marvelous system was doomed to be utterly undermined by modern astronomy did not destroy its fascination for him. It is as though he discerned in the bold but flawed astronomical theories of the Greeks – or at least in their methods, in the pattern of their thinking – an abiding truth: abstract thought and mathematical analysis allow one to see beyond mere appearances.

In *The value of science*, Poincaré puts a strikingly similar point of view. Though he expresses himself in a more overtly Platonic way than Rougier was accustomed to do, the formulation (given Poincaré's profound influence on Rougier) is worth quoting. Mathematical analysis, said Poincaré, allows us to see 'intimate analogies' which would otherwise remain hidden. Without the language of mathematics,

... we should forever have been ignorant of the internal harmony of the world, which is [...] the only true objective reality. (Poincaré 1946, p. 207).

But the story Rougier tells in *La religion astrale des Pythagoriciens* owes more, perhaps, to the dynamic positivism of Renan than to the static Platonic vision of Poincaré. Like Renan, Rougier emphasizes, and revels in, the reverses and paradoxes of intellectual history while yet remaining clearly committed to the view that, in the long run and despite innumerable setbacks, human knowledge progresses to higher and higher levels.

This belief in progress, tied as it is to a strong commitment to the traditions of Greek thought and classical culture, has obvious implications for Rougier's social and political thought. But

equally important for his social thinking are broader questions concerning his metaphysical and religious orientation.

Rougier, while rejecting dogmatic religion, retained, like Renan and Poincaré, a strong attachment to ideals of order and harmony which were quite at odds with the dominant strands of 20th century empiricism; and also, one might suggest, with the pragmatic secularism of most contemporary political and economic thought and practice.

¹ Rougier's *Les origines astronomiques de la croyance pythagoricienne en l'immortalité de l'âme* was published in 1932. Rougier (1959), upon which my analysis is based, is a revised edition of the early work.

² See also Rougier (1959, pp. 78 ff.). On the issue of the vogue for the Pythagorean thesis in France in the first half of the century, Simone Weil's strong interest in Pythagoras might be seen as indicative of a more general interest in Pythagoras amongst the French intelligentsia. Pétrement (1976, p. 395) discusses Weil's interest in Plato and Pythagoreanism. As it happens, Rougier and Weil appear to have been friends (see Chapter 14, note 6).

³ In the bibliographical notes of *La religion astrale* (1959, p. 107), Rougier cited works by himself, by Pierre Boyancé (who emphasized the role of Plato's disciples in generalizing the celestial eschatology) and by A.J. Festugière as representing a tradition opposed to Cumont's oriental thesis. Culiuanu notes that Boyancé largely accepted Rougier's views.

⁴ The expression 'common opinion' seems somewhat curious given the rarified nature of the debate and the relative obscurity of the protagonists. Culiuanu has the air of one of those scholars whose dedication to his vocation leads to an overvaluation of the general importance of, and an exaggeration of the general interest in, academic concerns. He hints darkly, elsewhere in the book, that the views of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* had 'ideological implications which could lead to dangerous consequences' (1983, p. 23). 'A general exposing of the latter still waits for an author and a publisher to attempt it,' he continues, rather unhelpfully. One thing such comments do indicate, however, is that the realm of scholarship in which Cumont and Rougier (as historians of ancient religion) were operating was one fraught with obscure ideological battles.

⁵ Their affinities will be discussed in Chapter 7.

⁶ See the 1959 Dover reprint.

⁷ It might be noted that, in his 'Preface to the English Edition', Burkert signals that he has modified some of his views, and generally takes a conciliatory tone, mentioning works by de Vogel and Philip to which I have referred and which take a very different approach to his. He trusts that his book, while not definitive, at least 'gives a full and perspicuous presentation of the evidence and thus will be useful even to those who are not inclined to draw the same conclusions from it' (1972, p. iii). Further evidence for Burkert having modified his earlier views is given below. The changes bring him closer to Rougier's position, and mean, in effect, that he himself has renounced the radical critique of Rougier's views which he had mounted in the early 1960s.

⁸ The substance of Rougier (1959) is, as I have noted, little different from that of the earlier work.

PART THREE: ATTITUDES TO SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Chapter 6

Rougier and the heritage of French conventionalism

Though his thought is closely associated with logical empiricism, Rougier stood apart from the Vienna Circle in a number of ways. I think his position can only be understood if it is seen in the light of his debt to French conventionalism or commodism. In the course of this chapter, the nature of this conventionalist tradition, and Rougier's relations to it, are explored.

Despite the fact that Henri Poincaré and other French conventionalists who influenced Rougier so profoundly also influenced the Vienna Circle¹, the underlying spirit of the French tradition was quite at odds with the general thrust of the logical positivist movement. Put simply, the French tradition promoted a positive attitude to religion, in direct contrast to the general thrust of the logical positivist movement.

The various strands of conventionalism and logical positivism may be seen as representing differing responses to certain scientific developments. French conventionalism was inspired by a range of developments in science and mathematics, most notably by the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries, and by the subsequent growth of a more sophisticated and reflective view of the nature of logic and language and empirical evidence. The logical empiricists (and the Polish inheritors of the French tradition) were inspired by these same developments, as well as others, including set-theoretic paradoxes, alternative logics, and relativity and quantum theory in physics. But, whereas the more enthusiastic exponents of conventionalism sought in effect to undermine, not only the notion of necessary truths, but also the notion of scientific truth as it was previously understood, the logical empiricists (and moderate conventionalists like Poincaré) maintained a high regard for empirical science and a keen interest in scientific developments, in physics for example.

As well as helping to explain the nature of his relations with the Vienna Circle, Rougier's commodist heritage might also be seen to explain in part his priority in a number of areas. For example, under the influence of Poincaré, he early rejected Russell's mathematical realism (Rougier 1945, pp. 19-20; 1961, p. 10). And while Wittgenstein (and, to some extent, Schlick and Waismann) only gradually developed an appreciation of the multiplicity of language

games, Rougier, partly through his conventionalist heritage and partly no doubt on account of his vast reading in intellectual and religious history, exhibited even in his early writings a keen sense of the actual and potential variety of modes of thinking and speaking. He was never captive of a unitary system like that of the early Wittgenstein. Rougier's early and unequivocal rejection of the reductionism and behaviourism of the logical positivists also appears to owe something to his conventionalist roots. Other aspects of his philosophy which derive directly from the French conventionalist tradition pre-empt ideas that have come to prominence in post-World War II America. For example, his insistence on the impossibility of drawing a clear distinction between empirical and theoretical statements prefigures Quine's rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Like Quine, Rougier takes a holistic view of perception and meaning:

L'objet révélé par la perception sensible n'est qu'un groupe particulièrement stable de qualités, retenues dans un nexus de relations, en dépendance fonctionnelle avec le milieu ambiant [... L]a ligne de démarcation tracée par l'esprit entre les caractères à retenir et ceux à éliminer dans la formation d'un concept est flottante; elle varie avec la mentalité d'un chacun et le progrès de nos connaissances. La distinction entre les caractères essentiels et accidentels et, par suite, entre les jugements synthétiques et analytiques est ainsi purement psychologique et mentale. (Rougier 1920a, pp. 392-3)

[The object of sense perception is only a particularly stable group of qualities held in a nexus of relations, in a state of functional dependence with respect to the ambient milieu [...]. The line of demarcation traced by the mind between the elements to retain and those to eliminate in the formation of a concept is not fixed. It varies with each person's mentality and state of knowledge. The distinction between essential and accidental characteristics, and so between synthetic and analytic judgements, is thus purely psychological and mental.]

Before attempting further to clarify Rougier's position, it may be useful to distinguish between different versions of conventionalism. In this matter, I am relying heavily on the analysis of Jerzy Giedymin, whose interest in the question was stimulated by personal contacts with Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (Giedymin 1982, p. xiii).

Henri Poincaré and Pierre Duhem simultaneously but independently revived the conventionalist tradition in philosophy (Giedymin 1982, p. vii). Popper classed both as extreme

conventionalists or nominalists (Giedymin 1982, p. 16), but this does not accord with Poincaré's explicit disavowal of nominalism in the course of his debate with the more extreme Le Roy (Poincaré 1946, pp. 321 ff.); whereas Duhem, though he disavowed Le Roy's extra-scientific conclusions, apparently endorsed his account of science (Giedymin 1982, pp. 40 and 119). (Duhem, as we will see, had his own extra-scientific agenda.)

Edouard Le Roy was an extreme conventionalist. In articles published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1899 and 1901, he presented his version of conventionalism as a product of the French new critique of science, a movement comprising such names as Poincaré, Duhem, Claude Bernard, E. Boutroux, G. Milhaud, J. Wilbois and Le Roy himself (Giedymin 1982, p. 119).

For the purposes of this discussion, the crucial distinguishing feature of extreme conventionalism (termed nominalism by Poincaré and Popper) is its rejection of scientific realism. For the 'nominalist' Le Roy, facts are created by the mind, and science consequently lacks cognitive authority. Le Roy insisted on the validity of diverse orders of knowledge, and rejected the notion that there is one true perspective or method (Giedymin 1982, pp. 120 ff.). (He had an explicit religious agenda which will be discussed later.)

In 1902, Poincaré (characterized by Giedymin as a moderate conventionalist) argued against Le Roy and defended the objectivity and cognitive value of science in an article in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 'Sur la valeur objective des théories physiques', reprinted as part III of his book *La valeur de la science* (first published in 1905; translated into English with his other general writings on science and published under the title *The foundations of science* in 1913²). For Poincaré, scientific facts are merely commonsense facts translated into a specialised, technical language, and are therefore not created by scientists in any clear sense. Poincaré states simply that, although he is in accord on many points with Le Roy, he cannot go all the way with him (1946, p. 322). He rejects both his nominalism and his Bergsonian anti-intellectualism which he sees as self-defeating (1946, p. 321). Specifically, he rejects Le Roy's view of facts (1946, pp. 325 ff.). Poincaré emphasized the crucial role of experimental procedures and the lack of any sharp division or unbridgeable gulf between commonsense knowledge and science, between crude and scientific facts (1946, p. 325). He saw the nominalistic attitude (exhibited by Duhem as well as Le Roy) as alien to science as we know it (Poincaré 1946, p. 335).

The commodist tradition, very strong in France about the turn of the century, was developed in the early 20th century not so much in France (where Rougier was very much a loner) as in Poland, by such thinkers as Jan Lukaszewicz and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, reentering the mainstream of European thought in the mid 1930s mainly through articles published in *Erkenntnis* and via conferences sponsored by the Vienna Circle, such as the 1935 Paris Congress which Rougier presided over.

Though both logical empiricism and the radical conventionalism that grew out of the French new critique of science of the late 19th century were inspired by the same developments in science and mathematics, the respective orientations of the two traditions were (as suggested earlier) quite different. The conventionalist tradition was not inclined – as were the neopositivists – to dismiss as meaningless the traditional problems of metaphysics: the tenor of its philosophical background was more sympathetic to non-scientific modes of discourse and understanding. Ajdukiewicz, for example, emphasised his debts to Kant, Bolzano and Husserl, as well as to Dilthey and Spranger, endorsing the hermeneutic idea of understanding as a valid method in the fields of epistemology and the history of philosophy (Giedymin 1982, p. 111).

In fact, attitudes not only to metaphysics but also to religion could be seen to be a major motivating factor behind the respective traditions. The logical positivists generally sought to undermine religion's authority, whereas the French and Polish conventionalists (and Wittgenstein also) generally sought to defend the religious attitude. Duhem and Le Roy are both striking examples of thinkers who were driven by religious conceptions. The case of Duhem is perhaps the more surprising as his reputation as an objective historian and philosopher of science remains high (possibly in part due to Quine's references to his ideas), whereas Le Roy is little known, at least in the Anglo-American context.

Respected as a pioneer in the history of science, Pierre Duhem appears in reality to have been more concerned with myth-making and apologetics than history, seeing as he did the field of the history of science as a battleground on which he was fighting to vindicate Catholic Christianity. Philosophically, he moved from a quasi-Thomist position in the 1890s, to a mature position which emphasised the underdetermination of theories by fact, and the goal of a natural classification of scientific laws (Duhem 1996, pp. 29 ff. and pp. 67-68).

[The physicist is] forced to recognize that *it would be irrational to work towards the progress of physical theory if that theory were not the more and more clear, and more*

and more precise reflection of a metaphysics. The belief in an order transcending physics is the sole reason for the existence of physical theory. (Duhem 1996, p. 237)

A number of scholars have recognised the importance of religious motives in Duhem's work. In their introduction to a collection of Duhem's essays, Roger Ariew and Peter Barker observe that Duhem 'expected the end point of science, the natural classification, to harmonize with the teachings of the Catholic Church' (Duhem 1996, p. xi). Leszek Kolakowski (1968, p. 148) notes that Duhem revealed in his *Physics of a believer* that his analyses of scientific method were motivated by a desire to neutralise scientific knowledge in relation to metaphysical and religious controversies. And R.N.D. Martin (1991) has made a strong case for the importance of religious motives in Duhem's work.

These motives are indeed quite explicit in a number of Duhem's writings, nowhere more so perhaps than in a letter of 1911 to Père J. Bulliot, Head of the Department of Philosophy of the Institut Catholique in Paris on the relations between science and religion. Duhem's tone and the terms he uses exemplify perfectly Durkheim's view of religion as rooted in the experience of membership of a group, the internal harmony of which contrasts with and feeds on a hostile attitude to outsiders.

Living among those who profess doctrines contrary to ours, I am well placed to understand their plan of attack against us and to see where our defenses must be reinforced. (Duhem 1996, p. 158)

Duhem identifies the idea of the incompatibility of the scientific and the religious mind as 'the field on which the battle has been waged and where, without any doubt it will become more violent' (Duhem 1996, p. 158).

It is claimed, as established, that no sensible person could accept the validity of science and believe in the dogmas of religion at the same time. (Duhem 1996, p. 158)

Science appears to be based firmly on reason and the testimony of the senses, religion on nothing more than vague aspirations and the intuitions of sentiment, but this characterization is false. The standard view of the gradual freeing of European man from the fetters of religion is built on 'lies in the domain of logic and lies in the domain of history' (Duhem 1996, p. 159). In fact,

... the teaching that claims to establish the irreducible antagonism between the scientific mind and the Christian mind is the most colossal, boldest lie that has ever attempted to dupe the human race. (Duhem 1996, p. 159)

Duhem's analysis – designed to show that no such antagonism exists – emphasises that human reason, while utilising the same essential means to arrive at the truth, adapts the use it makes of these means to the specific object whose knowledge it wishes to acquire.

Thus, with the help of common operations that properly constitute our intellect, it sees the pursuit of a method for the mathematical sciences, a method for physics, a method for chemistry, one for biology, one for sociology, and one for history. (Duhem 1996, p. 160)

For these disciplines have different principles and different objects, and, in order to reach those objects, we must follow 'different routes from different points of departure'. In order to attain religious truths, then, human reason uses the same basic means as it uses for other cognitive pursuits, but uses them in a different manner 'because the principles from which it departs and the conclusions toward which it tends are different' (Duhem 1996, p. 160).

It must be admitted, I think, that these views are somewhat confused, or at least not clearly expressed. Nonetheless, there does appear to be some similarity between Duhem's notion of 'different routes' and Rougier's emphasis on the variety and multiplicity of mentalities, and in particular his (1940) views on the relativity of logic, discussed below. The Duhem letter parallels other aspects of Rougier's thought also.

The general topic of the letter was one Rougier often touched on and sometimes, as in his article, 'Les rapports de la science et de la religion' (1930) or in his work on the astral religion of the Pythagoreans (1959), explored at length. Furthermore, Duhem's dual focus on the logic of science (and religion) and the history of science (and religion) parallels a natural division of Rougier's work.

Duhem's key contention, that science and religion are not incompatible, is an underlying theme of much of Rougier's work. While recognising the incompatibility between specific scientific theories and specific religious doctrines, Rougier sees no general or necessary incompatibility between science and religion (1930, pp. 262 ff.). He praises Pythagoras not only for his

mathematical and scientific genius, but also for his mystical genius, indeed for his unique combination of the two (Rougier 1959, p. 28).

Links between Rougier and Duhem go beyond common themes, interests and preoccupations. It was Louis Rougier who prepared for publication (in 1917) a posthumous volume of Duhem's *Le système du monde* (Allais 1990, p. 59). (There are also similarities in terms of the pattern of their respective academic careers, both having taught at Caen, and both having failed to gain a position in Paris.)

In terms of their writings, it must be admitted, however, that Rougier is more open to the ironies and complexities of intellectual history than Duhem, who is more inclined to make heavy-handed generalisations in defence of a set dogmatic position. For instance, Rougier (1959, p. 22) highlights the irony of the fact that developments in astronomy in the 5th and 4th centuries BC led to a reconciliation of science and religion when developments in astronomy had been a major cause of the original divorce. Another point he often makes relates to the way false ideas can lead, at times, to true and useful ideas. For example, Babylonian astrology first stimulated and then held back the advance of the science of astronomy (Rougier 1959, p. 28). Rougier's ambivalence regarding the notion of natural rights (discussed elsewhere) might also be mentioned in this context.

By contrast, Duhem charted a direct, unequivocal course, driven by a not-so-hidden agenda. Witness his comments on pagan theology – notably the Pythagorean notion of the stars as gods – as holding back the development of astronomy.

Now, how did [the human mind] break these fetters? The answer is Christianity...
(Duhem 1996, p. 160)

Duhem (1996, p. 161) proceeds to mention Jean Buridan and Nicole Oresme as precursors of Copernicus and Galileo. Though Rougier explicitly accepts Duhem's point regarding the crucial role of the more empirically-minded Christian thinkers of the late Middle Ages (Rougier 1936, p. 195), he remained more aware than Duhem of the negative impact on science of Christianity, and indeed of the positive impact of Pythagorean ideas.

Duhem's religious commitment seems to have blinded him to the inner complexities of intellectual history, leading him at times to make extreme and distorted claims. In fact, Duhem succumbed to a particularly dangerous notion which, ironically, Rougier's mentor Franz

Cumont (1960, p. 83) had noted in the Stoic Posidonius, namely that special access to scientific truths is vouchsafed to the virtuous, or, as Cumont put it, that true knowledge is the reward of piety. Duhem suggested that the purpose of the history of science is

... to lead us to recognize that when people cared most of all about the kingdom of God and his justice, God gave them in addition the deepest and most fruitful thoughts about the things here below. (Duhem 1996, p. 161)

Edouard Le Roy, whose views on the philosophy of science were, as we have seen, very similar to those of Duhem, had, like Duhem, strong spiritual preoccupations. He too was associated with the Catholic Church. According to Kolakowski (1968, p. 135), Le Roy was 'an active member of the modernist movement in French Catholic thought'. The article by J.M. Somerville on Le Roy in *The Catholic encyclopedia* (1967) presents him as a Catholic philosopher who developed Bergson's evolutionary philosophy in the direction of a Christian 'psychistic' idealism. His philosophy has what might be called a negative side, which sought to restrict the scope of science. This aspect of his philosophy, which has been alluded to above, emphasizes that science, as a mere system of symbols, cannot penetrate into ultimate reality. Le Roy 'opposed philosophies that tended to substitute abstract concepts for an intuition of life' (Somerville 1967). The other thrust of his philosophy attempts to address that issue of ultimate reality, utilising Bergsonian concepts of intuition, life and evolution. It is a dynamic philosophy, contrasting the static nature of abstract concepts with life which is always on the move.

The process of evolution begins with a diffused cosmic energy that is latently psychic; life is manifested when this energy is concentrated in organisms of growing complexity. (Somerville 1967)

Man is a being who transcends the biological realm, and his evolution is continued in the realm of the spirit. Somerville (1967) notes that there are many resemblances between Le Roy's phenomenology of evolution and the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was, it appears, Le Roy's 'friend and associate'.

Parallels with Rougier must be noted. He too claimed Teilhard as a friend, and often referred to him. Rougier was inclined to see evolution in teleological terms and in terms of consciousness which aligns him more with the views of Renan, Spencer, Bergson, Le Roy and Teilhard than with those of Darwin. Like Le Roy, Rougier often emphasises the dynamic nature of reality,

and speaks of life as something too rich and complex for science to grasp, as well as appealing to intuition. (References to articles of 1936 and 1938 are cited and discussed below.)³

Though Le Roy and Duhem did not have identical views on religious issues – as noted above, Duhem distanced himself from Le Roy's extra-scientific conclusions – their perspectives were similar. If they belonged to different factions of the Catholic Church, they were both happy to be identified as Catholics, and both were much concerned to defend spiritual values in the face of the threat of science. Given the similarity of their religious and philosophical views, it would not be unreasonable to impute to Le Roy similar motives to those that drove Duhem, and to see his philosophy of science as being to a large extent determined by a prior religious and metaphysical agenda.

A similar pattern emerges when one turns one's attention to Polish conventionalism. Kolakowski (1968, p. 175) comments that the philosophical essays of Jan Lukasiewicz 'are in part colored by his religious convictions'. The same could be said of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, who defined metaphysics and religion in very similar terms, and who was clearly sympathetic to both. Religion 'claims that it provides an ultimate world-view; ultimate in the sense that eudaemonic and moral evaluations based on it are unshakeable and need not fear change when our horizons are expanded' (Ajdukiewicz 1973, p. 163); metaphysics 'strives towards an ultimate world-view' embracing 'a horizon so extensive that it could not be objected that recommendations based on this view, its paths of happiness and duty, are not provisional (*sic*) and will survive (*sic*) any broadening of horizons' (1973, p. 165). Ajdukiewicz speaks of man's 'search for the role which he has to play in the grand plan of creation' which 'leads directly into a search for the plan of the whole, of the aim or the sense of the world' (1973, p. 165).

The Polish conventionalists were certainly somewhat more discreet and restrained about voicing their religious views than Duhem or Le Roy, a function perhaps of the times in which they lived. Nonetheless, any analysis of the conventionalist tradition needs to take account of its ideological or religious roots. The worth of a tradition can transcend its origins, but a tradition will be seriously misunderstood if its origins and the sometimes unspoken preoccupations of its developers are not constantly borne in mind.

It is clear that Polish conventionalism does indeed represent a continuation of the French conventionalist tradition. Lukasiewicz's much reprinted – 1912, 1915, 1934, 1961, and (in English) 1970 – article, 'Creative elements in science', is a crucial link. A notable feature of the

article is its general metaphysical tenor. Science is presented as a human endeavour quite as dependent on inspiration and creativity as religion and the arts. The goal of science is not truth.

The human mind does not work creatively for the sake of truth. *The goal of science is to construct syntheses that satisfy the intellectual needs common to humanity.*

(Lukasiewicz 1970, p. 13)

However, the demands of logical consistency and facts impose constraints on the 'poem of science'. A scientific theory must be logically coherent and should explain, order and predict facts (Lukasiewicz 1970, p. 14). Lukasiewicz's apparent attempt to avoid extreme conventionalism by appealing to basic facts which serve to anchor theoretical constructions in reality (1970, p. 13) seems to reflect Poincaré's position as outlined, for example, in *La valeur de la science*. Lukasiewicz cites (1970, pp. 4, 5) both this work, and Poincaré's *Science et méthode*.

Le Roy is mentioned in the context of a brief discussion of pragmatism. Lukasiewicz rejects the view, promoted both by Bergson and his follower Le Roy, that science has an essentially practical value.

Science has immense importance in practical matters [...] but the essence of its value rests elsewhere. (Lukasiewicz 1970, p. 5)

Combining an openness to the arts and religion with the moderate scientific conventionalism, this article exemplifies some of the best features of the conventionalist tradition. By all accounts it played an important role in popularising that tradition in Poland. According to Giedymin (1982, p. xiv), Lukasiewicz influenced both Ajdukiewicz and Kotarbinski. Subsequently, Ajdukiewicz, in developing his radical conventionalism in the early 1930s, drew directly on the French tradition.

Ajdukiewicz himself saw radical conventionalism as a critical, revised (radicalised) continuation of the philosophy of the new critique of science (*la nouvelle critique de science*) in France, in particular of Henri Poincaré and Edouard LeRoy. (Giedymin 1982, pp. 110-111)

This is clear not only from his choice of the term 'radical conventionalism', but also from explicit references to Poincaré and the Poincaré-Le Roy controversy (Giedymin 1982, pp. 112-113).

Rougier is very much a part of this conventionalist tradition, but it is not easy to characterise his exact position. For one thing, his views do appear to vary slightly over time. In general, I would say that in his early and later work he might be characterised as a moderate conventionalist like Poincaré or Lukasiewicz, though some of his writings, most notably his article on the relativity of logic (Rougier 1940), seem to exemplify a more extreme conventionalist position.

Rougier's profound debt to the writings of Poincaré has been discussed. In particular, his endorsement of Poincaré's defense of science as a source of knowledge should be recalled.

Furthermore, Rougier often refers to the Polish logicians, and in particular to the moderate conventionalist, Lukasiewicz, in his discussions of logic from the mid-1930s onwards. In his account of the 1935 congress (1936, p. 193) he gives considerable prominence to the Poles, and aligns himself with them against the Vienna Circle in terms of their understanding of the role and scope of philosophy. In his important article on the relativity of logic (1940), he mentions Lukasiewicz several times and cites five of his works. (See discussion below.)

Subtle shifts in Rougier's position are evident in articles published in the mid-to-late 1930s. In particular, one can discern a tendency, as the decade progresses, to be less dismissive of scholasticism, and an increasing assertiveness regarding the status of non-scientific modes of discourse.

As we have seen, in 'La scolastique et la logique' (1935b), he recapitulates the key themes of his 1925 book *La scolastique et le Thomisme* in which he set out to make explicit the logical structure of scholastic philosophy and to confront it with the results of modern logic. He identifies certain common *a priori* rational principles underlying medieval logic and constituting a rudimentary ontology which he sees as characteristic of a certain mental structure which he calls the realist mentality (1935b, p. 101). The value of scholastic philosophy depends then on the logical value of these principles, and Rougier proceeds to expose the errors implicit in the principles he identifies. For example, one assumption of scholastic philosophy identified

by Rougier was that all judgements are predicative; whereas scientific judgements are in fact judgements of relation. Some details of Rougier's analysis were discussed in Chapter 2, but the substance of his arguments is less significant in the current context than the terms in which that substance is expressed. Throughout the article he speaks unequivocally of the logical errors of the scholastics and of their ignorance, by implication asserting the reality of a cognitively superior (scientific) perspective.

Pour les Scolastiques, qui ignorent que la copule *être* est une catégorie grammaticale sans signification logique, l'univers est un ensemble de substances que la science a pour but de définir, de classer, de hiérarchiser. (Rougier 1935b, p. 101)

[For the scholastics – who didn't know that the copula 'to be' is a grammatical category without logical significance – the universe is a collection of substances which it is the goal of science to define, classify and put into hierarchies.]

In criticising logical attempts to prove the existence of God and the separate existence of ideas, Rougier appeals to sources associated with logical empiricism rather than to the French and Polish conventionalist tradition: to the authority of the Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein whose work had (purportedly) established the tautological character of pure thought, and to Russell's theory of types (1935b, pp. 106, 108). In his conclusion he sustains the non-relativist stance, and the empiricist emphasis, attacking the principles of the scholastic mentality as leading to contradictions, pseudo-problems and affirmations contradicted by experience. He alludes to the evolution – and thus the non-fixity – of species, and uses the language of logical empiricism in referring to the failure of the scholastics to base their theories on the protocol statements of experience.

Rougier was never again to write anything quite so sympathetic to empiricism. The 1935 article contains no references to the Polish conventionalists, and it appears that, at the time of its composition, Rougier's debt to the French conventionalist tradition had been somewhat eclipsed in his mind by his dealings with the Berlin and Vienna Circle philosophers. For in 1932 Rougier had been invited by Hans Reichenbach to the University of Berlin, and eighteen months later he was invited by Schlick – drawn out of his solitude, as he puts it – to the University of Vienna (Rougier 1961, p. 53). But Rougier was never really comfortable with some logical positivist attitudes, and soon he began to express his reservations. It is possible that Rougier's becoming aware of the Polish conventionalists was the catalyst which revived his longstanding, though at this time dormant, commitment to the conventionalist tradition of

his native land. Both the Polish tradition and his own intellectual history were rooted in the thought of Poincaré, Duhem and Le Roy. Henceforth he would always distance himself from radical empiricism (conventionalists being usually classed as *moderate* empiricists (Giedymin 1982, p. 138)).

The 1935 article discussed above draws on old material and predates the 1935 Paris Congress which Rougier organised, and at which Polish philosophers figured prominently. In an article entitled 'Une philosophie nouvelle' (1936), Rougier gave a popular account of the conference and its significance, highlighting the important role played by the Polish contingent. It seems that Rougier's own position has shifted since his 1935 article. He speaks of an emerging consensus amongst the Poles, the Swiss, the Italians and the French to the effect that the notion of philosophy must be enlarged beyond being merely the grammar of science (1936, p. 193). A moderate empiricism is being advocated, which is not incompatible with previous views, and some old themes, like the rejection of the synthetic *a priori*, are reiterated (Rougier 1936, pp. 193-194). However a new emphasis appears, a tendency to insist on the limits of natural science, and the need to curb its scope and authority by subjecting it to historical, psychological and sociological considerations.

Rougier draws attention to the exigencies of human reason which in part determine the shape and nature of knowledge, emphasising not, as Kant had done, their constancy, but rather their variability through time.

Nous retrouvons [...] ce que Enriques appelle 'les exigences *a priori* de la raison', dont on doit, du reste, concéder qu'elles furent singulièrement variables au cours des âges... (1936, p. 194)

[We recognize what Enriques calls 'the *a priori* exigencies of reason', conceding, moreover, that they have been singularly variable through the ages.]

Nonetheless, he does not opt for a radical relativism, referring again to the need to ground scientific knowledge in the concrete, physical as well as human.

Science, then, leads to real knowledge, but its scope is limited to the domain of statements which have an objective meaning for all men (Rougier 1936, p. 194). It can discuss the electromagnetic spectrum of visible light in terms of wavelength etc., but not the subjective experiences of the perception of colours. Science is concerned with structures, relations and

formal properties, not with the material content of experience (Rougier 1936, p. 195). Science does not encompass all of life, which imposes itself on us with a profusion that science cannot encompass and which gives rise to subjective experiences, choices and judgements of value which are beyond the scope of science and the philosophy of science to assess. These views are strongly reminiscent of those of Bergson and Le Roy.

Significantly, the article ends with an appeal for the French philosophic establishment to return to what is in effect the French conventionalist tradition: Rougier mentions, amongst others, Duhem, Poincaré and the nominalists of the 14th century (1936, p. 195).

Developing some of the ideas and examples of the 1936 article, Rougier argues in an article published two and a half years later that the dream of a unitary science is an illusion, for it is not possible to enunciate the whole of lived reality in the 'universal' language of physics (1938b, p. 189). This physicalist dream is just as illusory in the context of the empirical sciences as its counterpart in the context of the logico-mathematical sciences, the formalism of Hilbert. Gödel, writes Rougier, showed that one cannot demonstrate the consistency of a deductive theory without going beyond the theory, so that ultimately one cannot establish a coherent formal language without recourse to intuition, which means in effect that one must in the end resort to the informality of ordinary language. In like manner, Rougier argues, one cannot dispense with descriptive language in physics, nor with introspective language in psychology and sociology.⁴

Elaborating views regarding the nature of the language of quantitative physics put forward in his 1936 article, Rougier accepts that such language has a universal, intersubjective meaning, but only because it is stripped of all intuitive and consequently of all subjective content. It is limited to the description of spatio-temporal relations between physical magnitudes expressible in the formal language of mathematics (Rougier 1938b, p. 191). In a subsequent section of the article, Rougier argues that, because the physicist must ultimately refer to an instrument and its function to relate the formal theory to the real world, purely mathematical language is in fact insufficient: even in physics one must have recourse to the descriptive language of qualities (1938b, p. 193).

Rougier's use of the notion of intuition is perhaps significant. Reference has already been made to the important role that intuition played in the philosophies of Bergson and Le Roy. It was also an important concept for Lukasiewicz as well as the mathematical intuitionists. It is

difficult to say precisely which sources Rougier was drawing on, but the context, and the reference to 'subjective content', brings Le Roy's philosophy to mind.

Rougier is perhaps less convincing on the topic of psychology than he was on physics. Because there exists, he writes (1938b, pp. 192-193), no ensemble of invariable psycho-physical laws which permit one to associate unambiguously a particular subjective state to a particular group of individual or collective reactions, the problem of determining norms of social behaviour requires ultimately the use of introspective language. Consequently, the language of psychology cannot be translated into the language of physics.

Perhaps in the light of current knowledge of brain function, this argument loses some of its force: Rougier is operating with the brain-as-black-box assumptions of the behaviourists he was attacking. One could argue that a more sophisticated form of physicalism would be proof against Rougier's argument, framed as it is not in terms of subjective states and brain states but rather in terms of subjective states ('états d'âme') and publicly observable behaviour. Nevertheless, the general tenor of his approach recalls current philosophical approaches to the issue of consciousness.⁵

Rougier concludes his argument with an allusion to Plato's account of Socrates' refusal to flee prison. This passage underscores the inability of the behaviourist to provide an explanation (which must be given in terms of reasons, etc., that is in (folk) psychological language).

Le physicalisme se trouve ainsi réfuté dans cette page célèbre du *Phédon*. (Rougier 1938b, p. 193)

[Thus does physicalism find itself refuted on this famous page of the *Phaedo*.]

The essay ends with another rhetorical flourish, this time metaphorical and based on classical myth which, despite the tendency of Schlick himself to indulge in literary rhetoric and metaphor, does seem slightly out of place in this flagship publication of the Vienna Circle.

La science est comme le géant Antée. Elle ne peut s'élever de terre dans le ciel de l'abstraction, en dépouillant les limitations de l'intuition concrète, qu'à condition de reprendre pied à terre pour s'élancer toujours plus haut. (Rougier 1938b, p. 193)

[Science is like the giant Antaeus. It can raise itself from the earth into the sky of abstraction, casting off the limitations of concrete intuition, but only by returning to the solid earth; only thus can it leap still higher.]

One doubts that the readers of *Erkenntnis* were much impressed.⁶

The allusion to Antaeus (repeated in fact in Rougier (1961, p. 79)) does make it clear, however, that Rougier is dissociating himself from radical conventionalism in so far as he rejects the circularity and relativism implicit in that position. There is a foundation for knowledge, the return to earth symbolizing the ultimate foundation of scientific knowledge in the basic data of observation and experiment. Rougier's views in the 1938 article have remained very close to the views he expressed two years earlier. His chief concern is to limit the scope of science without, apparently, rejecting its claims to objectivity.

An article by Rougier published soon afterwards is both more substantial and more radical. Rougier (1940)⁷ opens with an historical survey of the development of logic, from Aristotle to Descartes to the new developments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Aristotle's theory of deduction is seen to imply a theological conception of the world, as its basic propositions and theories derived therefrom are true in themselves, and so must exist in some sense independently of human minds. This view implies, according to Rougier, an acceptance of the notion of Platonic ideas, and leads, in the Christian era, to a purported proof of the existence of a divine intellect wherein these eternal truths are perpetually understood (Rougier 1940, p. 307). This account is free of the absolute value judgements characteristic of earlier articles, and Rougier cites with qualified approval Bossuet's version of the proof (1940, pp. 307-308).

Rougier then deals with non-Euclidian geometries, the axiomatic of David Hilbert (which appears to undermine the basis of Aristotelian logic), and subsequently with the *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein and the tautological character of logical laws. Logic becomes a sort of auxiliary calculus for the manipulation of synthetic propositions which alone are endowed with content and which alone can express all our knowledge of the universe (Rougier 1940, p. 313). All meaningful propositions are synthetic or tautological or contradictory (Rougier 1940, p. 314). Any statement outside of these categories is meaningless, a product of bad grammar. Metaphysics is merely a malady of language.

Having then presented as opposing positions an Aristotelian metaphysical view which forces us to accept a divine mind which is not a part of the world of our immediate perceptions, and a

radical empiricism in the manner of the Vienna Circle, Rougier now sets out to argue – against the latter! Such an empiricism is unsustainable because the terms ‘tautology’, ‘synthetic’, ‘contradictory’ and ‘devoid of sense’ have no absolute sense, but are relative to the language we adopt. This view may seem to have links with Wittgenstein’s later views, but for Rougier Wittgenstein remains always the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. Rougier’s inspiration is clear: he is returning to his roots in French conventionalism, no doubt in part under the influence of Lukasiewicz and the Polish school.

... [L]e choix d’une logique bivalente, trivalente, polyvalente est une question de pure commodité, aussi libre que la graduation d’un baromètre en deux, trois ou plusieurs secteurs. Suivant l’ordre de recherche, suivant le but pratique que nous nous proposons, le choix de telle logique et de telle graduation est plus ou moins commode. (Rougier 1940, p. 315)

[The choice of bivalent, trivalent or polyvalent logic is a question of pure convenience, as free as the gradation of a barometer into two, three or several sectors. According to the type of research, according to the practical goal proposed, the choice of such and such a logic and such and such a gradation is more or less well adapted to the purpose.]

Rougier’s use of the word ‘commode’ must be taken as a deliberate signal of his identification with the French conventionalist (commodist) tradition.

The greater part of the rest of the essay is a survey of alternative logics. The 3-valued logic of Lukasiewicz is thrice referred to. Rougier argues that, though our choice of logic and by extension of language is free, it is not arbitrary: the choice is constrained by the sort of facts we are dealing with in our research, or by the goal to which we aspire in our action (1940, p. 322).⁸

Drawing on a wide range of sources, both scientific and philosophic, including Bacon, Hume, Kant, Paulette Février, Hans Reichenbach, John von Neumann, but most notably Henri Poincaré, Rougier then elaborates the philosophical consequences of his logical relativism. Following Poincaré, he argues that it is impossible to draw a clear distinction between empirical and theoretical (i.e. not directly verifiable by experience) statements, as any schematisation of experience can always be replaced by another equally valid schema which draws the line between the empirical and theoretical components in a different place (1940, pp. 324-325). Poincaré showed how empirical laws can be raised to the status of logical principles

by transforming them into disguised definitions: the law of the conservation of energy became such a principle by becoming in effect the definition of energy (Rougier 1940, p. 325).

Though Rougier had previously insisted and insists again that one's choice of framework is not arbitrary, the constraints on one's choice, as in the case of Carnap⁹, do seem minimal:

On la justifie par des raisons de tempérament intellectuel, de commodité théorique ou pratique. (Rougier 1940, p. 325)

[It is justified on grounds of intellectual temperament, or of theoretical or practical usefulness.]

If the notion of 'commodité' derives from Poincaré, the blank cheque of 'tempérament intellectuel' does not. Here is further evidence that Rougier has drifted from the moderate conventionalism of Poincaré towards a more extreme (Le Roy) or radical (Ajdukiewicz) conventionalism.

Furthermore, Rougier seems to be setting out not only to set appropriate limits on science, but, in the tradition of French and Polish conventionalism, also implicitly to defend religion. A statement can only be meaningless within a given language and in respect of the logical structure of that language (Rougier 1940, p. 326). The same statement, then, may be meaningless in one language and meaningful in another.¹⁰ It is surely significant that Rougier's example sentences are taken from the realms of medieval mysticism and theology (1940, pp. 327-328).

The article ends by rejecting a high cognitive role for science and strictly circumscribing its scope:

La science n'est pas 'le décalque des bleus dont s'est servi le Grand Architecte de l'Univers', suivant l'heureuse expression du général Vouilleman: la science reste une aventure humaine, qui, dans certains domaines, réussit. (Rougier 1940, p. 329)

[Science is not – to use General Vouilleman's felicitous expression – 'the transfer [i.e. traced copy] of the blueprints used by the Great Architect of the Universe'. Science remains a merely human adventure which happens to be successful in certain spheres.]

This statement is revealing of the author's motivations and preoccupations, its tone and content being totally in accord with the conventionalist program of limiting the scope of science in order to enhance the scope and status of other modes of knowing.

Rougier's drift towards an admittedly ambiguous relativism may, then, be plausibly linked to an increasing sympathy for spirituality, evidence for which may be found in his later social writings. While rejecting religious answers, Rougier does not reject religious questions. Like Wittgenstein and the Polish conventionalists, he could never accept the reductionism and the frankly anti-religious spirit of the dominant members of the Vienna Circle.¹¹

¹ Mainstream logical positivism certainly drew on the French tradition. A.J. Ayer (1952, p. 4) notes that Poincaré and Pierre Duhem appear in a 'surprisingly comprehensive' list of precursors included in the 1929 manifesto of the Vienna Circle written by Neurath, Carnap and Hahn. Carnap was certainly a conventionalist in so far as he highlighted the definitional components of physical theories, and indeed he specifically acknowledged the influence of Poincaré's conventionalism on his early thought (see Ayer (1982, p. 125)). Reichenbach is another logical empiricist associated with conventionalism. He traced his doctrine of the relativity of geometry back to Riemann, Helmholtz and Poincaré (see Diederich (1985, pp. 109, 114)). Hacker (1996, p. 185) discusses Reichenbach's rejection of phenomenalism in favour of a conventionalist form of realism. (It is worth noting that, of all the German-speaking philosophers, Rougier is probably closest – certainly in his later work – to Hans Reichenbach. In his *Traité de la connaissance* (1955, pp. 9, 26-27), he explicitly adopts – acknowledging his indebtedness to Reichenbach's functional theory of knowledge – a coherence theory of truth in the formal sciences, and a theory of verification and prediction in the physical sciences.)

² Reissued 1946.

³ The copy (held by the Library of the University of Alberta) of Rougier's *La scolastique et le thomisme* on which I worked is personally inscribed by the author to Le Roy in "respectful homage".

⁴ Rougier's casual allusion to Gödel's (Second) Incompleteness Theorem is unfortunate. The implications he purports to draw from it are far from convincing.

⁵ See discussion in the next chapter.

⁶ For whatever reason – the style of the articles, their content, their being in French, the (possible) personal unpopularity of their author – Rougier's writings were apparently totally ignored by the philosophers of the Vienna Circle and their associates. Was he simply being used by Neurath, Schlick and others as a 'token Frenchman' whose presence on committees and contributions to *Erkenntnis* would add credibility to the international aspirations of the movement?

⁷ Article first published in 1939.

⁸ There are clear similarities here to the views of Carnap who, influenced by Menger, introduced a 'principle of tolerance' in logic, whereby one was free to choose which logic to use according to convenience (Hacker 1996, p. 49). Hacker (1996, p. 62) quotes Carnap's 1934 statement: 'In logic there are no morals. Everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e. his own form of language, as he wishes.'

⁹ See previous note.

¹⁰ There is a problem here regarding the establishment of identity across languages which Rougier appears to overlook. Given his minimal use of formalism and consequent dependence on natural language for his arguments, coupled as it is with a certain lack of logical rigor, it may be more appropriate to class Rougier – at least at this stage of his career – with Le Roy as an extreme conventionalist rather than with, for example, the pre-1936 Ajdukiewicz as a radical conventionalist.

¹¹ Karl Popper took a very similar line – see Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

Intimate convictions

Rougier's views on the limitations of science and reason should now be coming into focus. In his work on logic, he warned against the pretensions of rationalism, the illusion that the human mind is able without empirical input to discern the structure of reality. Only the empirical dimension can lend to rational thought substantial content – but even the potent and productive combination of reason, observation and experiment is limited in what it can achieve. As was pointed out in the last chapter, Rougier's views on the scope of scientific explanation were closer to those of the Polish conventionalists than to the neo-positivist mainstream. Furthermore, Rougier's historical writings testify to his belief (shared with Renan) in the significance of religion in the cultural and intellectual evolution of humanity. Given the importance of these issues, it may be useful at this point to review Rougier's general attitudes to religion and to broadly metaphysical questions, relating his views to those of some other 20th century thinkers.

In a discussion appended to Noam Chomsky's *Language and thought*, Akeel Bilgrami alludes to 'recent rearguard, subjectivist Cartesian tendencies in such philosophers as John Searle and Tom Nagel' (1993, p. 58). The latter part of the last century (and the early part of this one) certainly did see an increased respect accorded by intellectuals to anti-physicalist and even religious ideas. John Horgan (1996 and 1999) has documented the trend. According to Horgan (1999, p. 249), the current mainstream view in academic circles may be characterized as 'mysterian'. In defining the mysterian position, Horgan (1999, p. 248) referred to Chomsky's distinction between problems and mysteries – that is, between questions which are amenable to scientific methods and questions which, though meaningful, are simply beyond and will remain beyond the scope of such methods. The so-called mysterian insists on such a distinction, whereas the anti-mysterian is disinclined to put limits on what science might achieve. Consciousness and freewill are likely to be seen as mysteries by the former and as either problems amenable to scientific treatment or as pseudo-problems by the latter.

Martin Gardner has explicitly identified himself with the mysterian movement. For Gardner, as for Horgan, the key areas of mysterian concern are consciousness and freewill, and he mentions Thomas Nagel, Colin McGinn, Jerry Fodor, Roger Penrose and Noam Chomsky as fellow mysterians (1996, pp. xix, 427). Gardner traces his inspiration back to Unamuno and William James. Indeed, the current mysterian movement has much in common with previous anti-physicalist movements which were prompted by scientific advances, from the Platonic reaction

to Milesian physics, to the 19th and 20th century reaction to the 'scientism' and 'reductionism' implicit in a Darwinian view of humankind.

Despite the fact that modern mysterians tend to the political left and would be adamantly opposed to any hint of cultural chauvinism, many of their central preoccupations are surprisingly similar to Rougier's. Rougier, like the new mysterians, insisted that there were meaningful questions which lay (probably forever) beyond the scope of science. In particular, he exhibited a fascination with human reason, and resisted scientific explanations of the mind and consciousness. One discerns in his writings on these matters a positive reluctance to attempt to bring the higher human functions and faculties down to earth in the manner of the logical positivists or of many of today's cognitive scientists. The behaviorist and physicalist arguments which he attacked were indeed flawed, but one suspects that Rougier was driven also by a sense that a physicalist explanation of consciousness would in some sense debase both the mind and the cultural heritage which it has created.

Of course, a rejection of physicalism is not tantamount to a religious perspective, but, a religious perspective – explicit or implicit – is certainly one of the things which can motivate such a rejection. And if one sees the religious perspective as a psychologist might, largely ignoring the nature of the doctrines subscribed to, and focusing on a general pattern of responses, then one may well be inclined to see strong similarities between religious and purportedly non-religious thinkers. John Searle, for instance, may not be a religious thinker, but his writings on consciousness (e.g. Searle 1997) exhibit more than a little hostility to scientific attempts to explain and demystify consciousness. His approach to the topic may be seen to have much in common with that exhibited by thinkers seeking to defend an essentially religious view.¹

The 'recent rearguard, subjectivist Cartesian tendencies' mentioned by Bilgrami, may be seen then to represent a late-20th century manifestation of a vague but venerable tradition of thought with roots in Platonism and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. At a time when traditional religious beliefs are not a live option for many, other outlets are required, and scholars will often express their beliefs in terms of the dignity of the individual or the specialness of mind. Something associated with humanity (or the wider universe) is deemed to be sacrosanct, out of bounds for science.

In attempting to ascertain Rougier's metaphysical position, one very important fact needs to be borne in mind, namely that Rougier rejected traditional philosophical metaphysics. While he certainly addressed metaphysical questions in his historical work, his chief philosophical focus is epistemology rather than metaphysics, which he sees as lying beyond the scope of 'scientific

philosophy'. He asserts that it is not possible to know the essence of things (1961b, p. 73). The riddle exists, but it is beyond the scope of human reason and science to find an answer.

Simply, metaphysics was not, for Rougier, an objective intellectual discipline. Rather it represents a general outlook on the world, and is inherently subjective and intensely personal.² Rougier's view of metaphysics is clearly closer to that of Kolakowski, who saw it in similar terms to religion (see previous chapter), than to that of traditional (and many current) philosophers.

On this issue, his attitude to the writings of Teilhard de Chardin is instructive. In discussing the views of the scientist-priest in a book review, Rougier is quite scathing about Teilhardian mysticism, mocking his pseudo-scientific vocabulary, and unequivocally rejecting his philosophy of history (Rougier 1961a, p. 4). Nonetheless, he knew and respected Teilhard the man, and maintained an open mind about panpsychism (which he associated with Teilhard), even if such a position could not be scientifically tested. Teilhard's theological training led him to take the products of his linguistic and conceptual virtuosity as statements about the world, as genuine explanations. Rougier rejects this view, but praises the poetry of Teilhard's vision: Teilhard is a great poet, celebrating, like Walt Whitman, the splendours of the natural world (Rougier 1961a, p. 4).³

Rougier's debt to William James has been noted, and his own metaphysical position seems to come close to James's. Specifically, we have noted that he drew on James's 'philosophy of experience' in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a). Bertrand Russell has said that James's philosophy of experience points in the direction of a 'neutral monism', whereby the ultimate stuff of the universe is neither mind nor matter, but something, as it were, prior to both. But, says Russell,

... James himself did not develop this implication of his theory; on the contrary, his use of the phrase 'pure experience' points to a perhaps unconscious Berkeleian idealism. (Russell 1961, p. 768)

Some of Rougier's comments (discussed below) may tempt one to make a similar judgement about him, though such judgements (of implicit tendencies, etc.) must always be highly provisional.

Rougier is silent regarding his early religious formation. Gilles Bounoure (1987, p. 145) speculates that he received a Voltairean and rationalistic education. Rougier's father was a doctor based in Lyon, and such views were very common amongst provincial doctors of the time. But Bounoure fails to take seriously the religious dimension of Rougier's thought. Renan would not have been so meaningful to him if Catholicism did not constitute a central part of his early years. Nicholas Rescher (personal communication, Feb. 16, 1999) supports this general position and sees evidence in Rougier's writings of a reaction against a Catholic upbringing.

Particularly noteworthy is the view of Alain de Benoist, who knew Rougier well in the last decades of his life. Surprisingly, even he is not quite certain about Rougier's early religious education.

Louis Rougier a été élevé dans un milieu très probablement catholique. (Personal communication, June 8, 1999)

Whatever the facts of his early years, Rougier's thought-world is without doubt, like that of Renan, permeated by Catholicism, and to the end of his life he made frequent allusions to historical and contemporary representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. Popes, cardinals, Jesuits and Dominicans populate his writings. (Late in life, he wrote under the pseudonym Jules Amadour a delicious – and perceptive – piece on the double life, both personal and intellectual, of Cardinal Daniélou, who had recently been found dead in the apartment of a 'stripteaseuse' (Amadour 1974).)

Rougier wrote as someone who, ever hostile to dogma, stood outside the Catholic Church. Yet in some sense he remains attached to it. He sees the Catholic Church as embodying many of the features and values of the classical world to which he was so devoted, whereas Protestantism tends in his mind to be associated with materialism and fanaticism. For Protestantism, returning as it did to the Bible and the values of early Christianity, represented a clear rejection of the Platonic and aristocratic elements which were a key element in Rougier's worldview. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, may be defined largely in terms of its classical and medieval inheritance.

In summing up his view of Renan, Chadbourne argues that the major weakness of his thought was that he

... remained too much under the shadow of his Christian past, too much in bondage to Christian ways of thinking. A successful rebel against Catholic orthodoxy in his youth,

he never succeeded in breaking cleanly with Christianity [... T]he supernatural beliefs he banished from the front door of his thought merely returned through the back.
(Chadbourne 1968, p. 151)

One is tempted to make a similar judgement on Rougier, but, since his early religious experiences and commitments remain obscure, talk of rebellion is speculative. One can, however, apply to Rougier with fewer reservations these remarks of Chadbourne's on Renan's place in intellectual history:

in the history of Western thought he stands between the Hegelian world of reason and the absolute, and the Nietzschean world of revolt and nihilism leading to a positive morality without God. Greek, Stoic and Judeo-Christian traditions of a transcendent goodness and justice still have meaning for him and bolster his position; but he is assaulted by doubts of a more modern nature, and glimpses a world that may be inscrutable, irrational, even absurd.

A section of Rougier's *La France en marbre blanc* which mixes aesthetic and broadly metaphysical themes underscores the appropriateness of the above description. Rougier comments there (1947, p. 142) that, through the prose of Pascal, Voltaire and Renan, one can discern the three most wonderful spiritual smiles. The smile, says Rougier, represents the ultimate response to the enigma of the universe. This observation in itself tells us much about Rougier's outlook and persona, and perhaps helps to explain why one has so much difficulty summing up that outlook: he is, in his various works, projecting his own – self-consciously inscrutable – smile. But the choice of Pascal, Voltaire and Renan, and the way Rougier characterizes them, tells us more. Pascal's is the smile of reason's mystic acquiescence in the impenetrable ways of the hidden God; Voltaire's is the smile of personal renewal and good humor (because, if the world is a bad joke, one can still try to render it good through gaiety); and Renan's is the indefinable smile of indulgence, of pity, of irony and of gratefulness for the perversities, follies and strivings of poor humanity.

Pascal, Voltaire and Renan make an interesting trio. Their views are hardly compatible, and Rougier's presentation of these three alternatives seems to suggest that he is not committing himself to a specific position, but hedging his bets, as it were, with respect to the ultimate questions.

Significantly, however, though Pascal is the only "believer", none of the three rejects altogether the notion of a spiritual realm. Voltaire's gaiety cannot be totally divorced from his deism, his

Enlightenment faith in order and reason; and Renan, as we have seen, was influenced by Hegel and seems at times to endorse a providential view of nature.

It is important to emphasize that the rationalism of both Voltaire and Renan excluded any notion of divine intervention in the course of history, and any naive view of providence. Voltaire is of course famous for ridiculing Leibniz's theodicy and any attempt to explain away natural evils such as the Lisbon earthquake. Nevertheless, the notion of reason current in the 18th century was more than the conviction that the natural world operated according to the laws of physics; it inherited elements of the worldview of classical Greek and Roman times and was thus able to sustain an essentially optimistic view which saw mankind and civilization as being, potentially at least, an intrinsic part of the harmonious order of nature. Deism is not equivalent to theism, but it nonetheless retains religious elements, not least the notion of a creator god, the ultimate source of an all-embracing order. Renan, of course, modified the Enlightenment view, but remained, as previously argued, an essentially religious thinker.

It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that Rougier also was committed to ideas which were essentially religious. Implicit in much of his work is the classical and Enlightenment notion of harmony and hidden order. His references to Pascal and other Christian thinkers are many, and, in presenting his ideal of cultural diversity and tolerance in *Celse contre les chrétiens*, he quotes with enthusiasm passages from late pagan authors on the hidden God (a favorite theme both of the Stoics and of Pascal).

Celsus, Plutarch and Themistius, for example, embrace a diversity of human religions, all of which draw their legitimacy from a common reality, a single providential intelligence which is known by different names and worshipped in different ways. Rougier cites Celsus:

Malgré la diversité des religions, quelle raison y a-t-il à supposer que Dieu ne soit pas le même pour tous les hommes et qu'il ne reconnaisse pas, sous la variété des noms et des rites, que tous leurs hommages lui sont adressés! (Rougier 1997, p. 82)

[Despite the diversity of religions, what reason is there to suppose that God is not the same for all men, and that he doesn't acknowledge that – under the variety of names and rites – all their homages are addressed to him?]

And Plutarch:

Il n'y a pas divers dieux [...] pour divers peuples, il n'y a pas des dieux barbares et des dieux grecs, des dieux du nord et des dieux du sud. Mais, de même que le soleil et la lune éclairent tous les hommes, de même que le ciel, la terre et la mer sont pour tous, malgré la diversité des noms par lesquels on les désigne, ainsi, il n'y a qu'une seule intelligence qui règne dans le monde, une seule Providence qui le gouverne, et ce sont les mêmes puissances qui agissent partout; seuls diffèrent les noms ainsi que les formes du culte, et les symboles qui élèvent l'esprit vers ce qui est divin sont tantôt clairs, tantôt obscurs. (Rougier 1997, p. 82)

[There are not different gods for different peoples, there are not barbarian gods and Greek gods, gods of the north and gods of the south. Rather, just as the sun and the moon shine on all men, just as the sky, the earth and the sea are common to all despite the diversity of names by which they are designated, so there is only one intelligence which rules the world, one Providence which governs it, and the same powers act throughout; only the names are different and the forms of worship; and the symbols which elevate the spirit towards the divine realm are sometimes bright and clear, sometimes dim and obscure.]

Themistius, a little-known writer of the 4th century, is praised by Rougier for recognizing that gaining knowledge of the author of nature is extremely difficult, and for drawing the conclusion that, in matters of religion, tolerance must be upheld. Themistius writes:

Le mot qui caractérise la vieille nature humaine: Chacun sacrifie à un dieu différent est plus ancien qu'Homère. Jamais cette paix entre les hommes n'a cessé d'être agréable à la divinité. La nature, d'après Héraclite, aime à se cacher: de même l'auteur de la nature. Nous l'honorons et nous l'admirons pour cette raison surtout que sa connaissance n'est pas chose à la portée de la main, ni superficielle, ni aisée, et ne peut être acquise sans effort et négligement. (Rougier 1997, p. 83)

[The saying which sums up human nature through the ages – Every man sacrifices to a different god – is older than Homer. Never has this tolerance between men ceased to be agreeable to the divinity. Nature, according to Heraclitus, loves to conceal herself: so too the author of nature. We honour him and admire him for this reason above all, that knowing him is no simple or superficial achievement; such knowledge is not within easy reach and cannot be acquired without care and effort.]

This belief in a deep spiritual unity overlaid by a diversity of cultural manifestations is evident also in Rougier's writings on language and culture. Renan was – yet again – a crucial influence. His *Histoire des langues sémitiques*, which purports to present a portrait of the Semitic genius as expressed in its languages, signals his participation in a tradition of idealism in the study of language and culture to which Rougier was also heavily indebted.

In early 18th century Europe, language came to be seen as the expression of the spiritual life of a nation, and this notion was revived and developed by later thinkers influenced by Romanticism. The linguist Robert Hall begins his lucid account of this movement with an analysis of the views of Giambattista Vico, whose 'conception of language as an artistic expression of the human "spirit" pervades the Scienza Nuovo⁴' (1963, p. 250). Wilhelm von Humboldt – often seen by historians of linguistics as the founder of the romantic school – is another seminal figure. Humboldt, who emphasized linguistic and cultural diversity, believed that an ethnic group can be seen to embody a unique genius. Josef Vachek (1966, p. 17) speaks of the emphasis on the 'delicate peculiarities' of a given language which marked the 19th century Humboldtian tradition.

Notable amongst the scholars who carried such notions forward into the late 19th and early 20th century were Benedetto Croce and Karl Vossler. Vossler wrote the 'manifesto of the romantic school' – *Positivismus und Idealismus in der Sprachwissenschaft* [1904].⁵ He saw languages as expressions of national character, their lexical, syntactic and pragmatic peculiarities as indicative of 'the type of mind predominating in that particular linguistic community' (Vossler 1932, p. 115).

La France en marbre blanc, a work on culture and language which had its origins in talks that Rougier gave to general audiences in North America during World War II, places him squarely within this idealistic tradition. In this emotive and unashamedly patriotic book, Rougier consciously seeks to distill the essential features of French culture, just as the idealized portraits in stone of Greek and Roman art sought to identify the permanent features ('les traits permanents'), the essential physiognomy, of their subjects.

C'est une France dégagée des scories de l'histoire, une France en pur Paros [...] une France en marbre blanc. (Rougier 1947, p. 9)

[It is a France freed from the dross of history, a France in pure *Paros*, a France in white marble.]

The work deals also with Greek culture which is seen as embodying certain universal values. Rougier seeks to define the Greek genius evident in Hellenic science and art, and to contrast it with the science and art of the Orient.

[Cette différence] se résume en un mot grec, qui s'est mystérieusement glissé dans la Prologue de l'Évangile de Saint-Jean comme la marque la plus authentique de l'Hellénisme sur le Christianisme naissant: 'Au commencement était le *Λογος*.' Le *Λογος* veut dire tout à la fois *discours, raison* and *raisonnement, rapport et proportion*. (Rougier 1947, pp. 15-16)

[This difference is encapsulated in a Greek word which mysteriously inserted itself into the Prologue of St. John's Gospel, and which represents the clearest evidence of the influence of Hellenism on nascent Christianity: 'In the beginning was the *Λογος*.' *Λογος* means at once discourse, reason and reasoning, relation and proportion.]

Admitting that language and discourse dates from the appearance of the first humans, Rougier suggests that the Greeks brought something new to the art of speaking:

Il n'est que comparer les vestiges littéraires de l'Égypt, de l'Assyrio-Babylonie, de la Syrie avec la littérature grecque pour le découvrir. La littérature des Orientaux consiste presque entièrement en l'art de narrer, de conter, de commander et de supplier. Les Grecs ont créé l'art de persuader par le raisonnement, l'art de démontrer. (Rougier 1947, p. 16)

[One needs only to compare the fragments of Egyptian, Assyrio-Babylonian and Syrian literature with Greek literature to discover it. The writings of the Orientals consist almost entirely of narration, story-telling, commanding and supplicating. The Greeks created the art of persuading through reason, the art of reasoned proof.]

Discourse, says Rougier, is the exteriorization of thought (1947, p. 17). *Λογος* signifies reason – something that lies beyond language ('par delà la parole'). This Greek notion of reason, then, is a mystical, aesthetic and ethical notion which transcends any particular culture:

La Grèce a fait au monde l'épiphanie de la raison, de la raison qui n'est d'aucun temps, d'aucun lieu, qui est le patrimoine commun de notre espèce, et qui s'exprime dans la

science spéculative, dans la beauté intelligible, dans la loi égale pour tous. (Rougier 1947, p. 29)

[The reason which transcends time and place, which is the common heritage of our species, which is expressed in speculative science, intelligible beauty and a law before which all are equal, this reason first made its appearance in Greece.]

Hellenism becomes humanism, such that whoever rejects Hellenism offends his own humanity and returns to barbarism.

Now, the main theme of *La France en marbre blanc* is that French culture and the French language have inherited the Greek spirit.

Le rationalisme grec a survécu et développé ses conséquences surtout en France. Il s'est intimement assimilé à notre mentalité ethnique. Il en a fait une mentalité éprise d'universalité et de rigueur logique, qui trouve son expression la plus typique dans l'esprit classique. (Rougier 1947, p. 31)

[Greek rationalism survived and developed its consequences above all in France. It intimately assimilated itself into our ethnic mentality, producing a mentality in love with universality and logical rigor which finds its most typical expression in the classical spirit.]

This classical spirit found its purest manifestation in the thought of Descartes and in the writings of the *philosophes* (Rougier 1947, pp. 41 ff.). But it continues to manifest itself, says Rougier, in many aspects of French life, not least in the French language – ‘la langue même de la raison’ (1947, p. 72).

In fact, Rougier's analysis of French, emphasizing the Subject-Verb-Object order of the French sentence and the intrinsic clarity and logicity of the language, mirrors the analysis of Karl Vossler. Both Vossler and Rougier (in the manner of the idealists) emphasize the effects of “top-down” interventions in the development of vocabulary and syntax. For them, the language of 16th and 17th century France was not merely changing, but in a process of formation, like an artifact.⁶ This process was driven largely by intellectuals, but reflected the character of the broader population.⁷

Rougier is clearly concerned, like many thinkers influenced by Romanticism, to define the 'delicate peculiarities' of natural languages. He comments in another section of *La France en marbre blanc* (1947, p. 142) that the French language is adapted more to the spiritual than to the world of the senses. In a later work, he develops a contrast between French and German.

L'allemand, en vertu du rôle fondamental qu'il confère aux verbes, exprime, bien mieux que le français par exemple, les aspects mouvants de la réalité, qu'il s'agisse des processus de la nature ou du flux de la vie consciente. Cette langue excelle à traduire les transitions, le clair-obscur des origines, la spontanéité des émergences, la plénitude des maturations, les demi-teintes des crépuscules. (Rougier 1960, p. 191)

[German, by virtue of the fundamental role that it assigns to verbs, expresses, better than French, for example, the changing aspects of reality, be it the processes of nature or the flux of conscious existence. This language excels in rendering transitions, the chiaroscuro of origins, the spontaneity of emergence, the plentitude of maturation, the half-tints of twilight.]

But Rougier's celebration of diversity is always complemented and perhaps constrained by his belief in the *Logos* which transcends time and place and which manifests itself in particular cultural traditions.

The writings of Rougier's last years are particularly rich in universal – and idealistic – themes. In discussing (in *The genius of the West*) the fact that we are living in a world in which intellectual work is becoming increasingly important, and physical exertion less so, Rougier refers to Teilhard:

It is in this "cerebralization" of the species that Teilhard de Chardin saw the signs of the emergence of the free spirit from its slavery to the material world. (Rougier 1971, p. 191)

In the same book there are comments that seem to align its author with the liberal Catholic tradition (to which Teilhard belonged). Having described the persecutions perpetrated by the Church, he states that it was not until

... the 1965 session of Vatican Council II that the Church renounced anathemas and, "as an hypothesis," finally accepted the concept of liberty of conscience, based on respect for the human person. (Rougier 1971, p. 148)

There follows a passage full of praise for the contemporary Church:

The Catholic Church no longer imposes, it proposes; it does not condemn, it invites discussion. It addresses itself to all people as a friend and an ally, seeking to contribute to the solution of human problems by appealing to the fundamental moral requirements of social living. (Rougier 1971, p. 148)

There is evidence elsewhere in the book of Rougier's participation in the broad tradition of cultural idealism which was discussed above. There is, for example, his appeal to the ideas of Giambattista Vico whom Robert Hall saw as a key figure in its development. Vico argued in the *Scienza Nuovo*, writes Rougier,

... that humanity was created by humanity and recorded by humanity, since a being who creates himself at the same time knows himself: "... this world of ours was made by men. It is therefore possible, since it is useful and necessary, to discover its principles in the modification of our own spirit." (Rougier 1971, p. 93)

Rougier also cites a comment of the historian Jules Michelet which encapsulates the key assumptions underlying the tradition:

'With the beginning of the world began a war which will not finish until the world is finished: this is the war of man against nature, of the spirit against matter, of liberty against fatalism. History is nothing else but the recital of this interminable struggle.' (Rougier 1971, p. 94)

A posthumously-published essay (Rougier 1986) has as its theme the idea that a final scientific understanding will never be achieved, due to the limitations of the human intellect. Nonetheless, the search itself is a source of meaning. The greatest mysteries concern the origin of life and the evolution of consciousness and self-consciousness, and implicit in the notion of self-consciousness are the notions of reflection and choice (Rougier 1986, pp. 36-37). The idea of freedom seems to play as central a role in Rougier's philosophy as it does for Sartre, though Rougier is more closely bound than Sartre to utilitarian and rational ideals. Rougier emphasizes the link between knowledge and action, and the importance of making deliberate choices

concerning the ends of our actions. Human life, though finite and precarious, is not without value. There are great and urgent problems, global problems, to solve.

La pire des disgrâces serait de n'avoir rien à entreprendre, aucune tâche à remplir, aucun défi à surmonter et de se reposer sans fin dans le nirvana d'un éternel présent. (Rougier 1986, p. 38)

[The most disgraceful thing of all would be to have nothing to strive for, no task to fulfil, no challenge to meet, merely to rest in the nirvana of an eternal present.]

Rougier was certainly no quietist. The essay ends with the suggestion that society embrace both eugenics and euthanasia. Though these goals are hardly priorities for the devout, the very notion of human progress implicit in the idea of eugenics could be seen to be, as indeed Lévy-Bruhl saw it, a religious idea.

Similar themes were developed in other late works. For instance, in his last book, *Du paradis à l'utopie* (1979), Rougier reiterates his reverence for mind, and seems again to flirt with some kind of religious commitment. Bearing in mind that, as ever, Rougier's rhetorical strategies make it extremely difficult to discern his personal view, it may be useful to look more closely at some sections of that work.

Like Searle, Rougier is keen to emphasize the mysteriousness of human consciousness. The most incomprehensible thing is the mind, he asserts (1979, p. 242). He speaks also of religion, claiming that it was a great achievement of the Enlightenment to have made religion a purely personal affair.

Le christianisme de nos jours est de plus en plus vécu, non comme une dogmatique, mais comme une morale fondée sur l'amour du prochain, la vertu du sacrifice ou tout simplement comme une discipline intérieure. (Rougier 1979, p. 254)

[Today's Christianity is lived more and more, not as a set of dogmas, but as a morality founded on the love of one's neighbour or the virtue of sacrifice; or quite simply as an interior discipline.]

These sentiments clearly feed into his political liberalism. As Steven Lukes has pointed out, privacy in its modern sense constitutes perhaps the central idea of liberalism. But, like the related notion of the dignity of the individual, it bears the marks of its religious origin.

[Liberalism] presupposes a picture of man to whom privacy is essential, even sacred ...
(Lukes 1973, p. 62)

Rougier seeks to dissociate religion from institutions. Having expatiated on the tribulations of the Roman Catholic Church, he claims that these failings and failures do not threaten a certain kind of faith.

Beaucoup de croyants dissocient le sentiment religieux des institutions religieuses. (Rougier 1979, p. 255)

[Many believers dissociate the religious sentiment from religious institutions.]

This religious attitude is based on a belief in a timeless morality. 'Morale intemporelle' was a favorite phrase of Rougier's, but here he relates it specifically to the Christian tradition, shorn of New Testament threats and curses. Such a belief, such a rationalized Christianity, is, of course, characteristic of 18th century thought, and Rougier refers to Rousseau and the natural religion of the *philosophes*. There is always a question about how much should be read into Rougier's historical narratives and interpretations. Is he endorsing some kind of natural religion, or merely recognizing the historical and psychological reality of what might be called a religious instinct?

L'Eglise peut périliter: le sentiment religieux fait l'élan vers l'idéal, d'une soif d'absolu, d'un besoin de se surpasser, que les théologiens appellent transcendance, subsistera. (Rougier 1979, p. 255)

[As the Church threatens to fall, the religious sense makes a leap towards the ideal; this sense, born of a thirst for the absolute, of a need to surpass oneself – what the theologians call transcendence – will continue to exist.]

Rougier subsequently takes up a familiar theme, that temperament determines one's metaphysic.

Schopenhauer, au sujet des grands systèmes philosophiques, déclare qu'ils sont avant tout, face à l'univers, l'expression d'un tempérament. Les uns, de nature affective, sont particulièrement sensibles à 'ces raisons du coeur que la raison n'entend pas' [...] D'autres sont dominés par les exigences intellectuelles... (Rougier 1979, p. 259)

[Schopenhauer asserts that the great philosophical systems are, above all, expressions of individual temperament in the face of the universe. Some writers, more emotional by nature, are particularly sensitive to 'those reasons of the heart that the mind doesn't understand'. Others are dominated by intellectual exigencies...]

Rougier suggests that such differences may be explained in part by genetic inheritance.

En vertu de la diversité de leur tempérament conditionné par leur hérédité génétique, les uns cherchent à décrypter le monde des apparences en imaginant un autre monde caché, surnaturel, qui en constitue le ressort et l'explication: ils jouent la carte de la foi. D'autres, confinés dans la caverne de Platon, n'ayant confiance qu'en ce qu'ils peuvent tester par leurs sens, cherchent à démêler l'écheveau des phénomènes afin de s'en rendre maîtres par la découverte de leurs lois. Ils jouent la carte de la connaissance. (Rougier 1979, p. 259)

[By virtue of genetically influenced variations of temperament, some seek to decode the world of appearances, imagining another, hidden supernatural world which both drives and explains the former: they play the card of faith. Others, confined in Plato's cavern, trusting only what they are able to test by their senses, seek to unravel the tangled skein of phenomena, to control these phenomena by discovering their laws. They play the card of knowledge.]

In reference to the history of astronomy and physics, Rougier concludes (1979, p. 261) that everyone interprets the same facts according to his need to believe or his intellectual exigences – like, on the one hand, Laplace, who had no need of the 'God hypothesis', and, on the other, Lagrange, who responded: 'Ah! c'est pourtant une belle hypothèse; cela explique tant de choses!' There are clear echoes here of Rougier's conventionalism. As in his essay on the relativity of logic, he appears to be suggesting that science does not, indeed cannot, invalidate the religious perspective.

Just at the point when one might expect Rougier to reveal his own position, he deftly slips from religion to politics, reiterating the need for tolerance, and for freedom of thought and belief.

Though Rougier insists that knowledge is not enough, he does not unequivocally play the card of faith. Science must be used in the service of humanity, and science will not of itself identify worthy ends. Knowledge must be subordinated to the timeless morality that religious traditions have helped to frame: the very survival of the species depends on it (Rougier 1979, p. 266).

What is not clear is whether Rougier is suggesting that religion and morality have an intrinsic or merely an instrumental value.

Again, Rougier's rhetorical strategies effectively block further enquiry into his 'intimate convictions'. Only putting Rougier in the broader context of his time can sharpen the picture and begin to resolve the studied ambiguities of his prose.

When logical positivism was at its height, resistance to its aggressive physicalism came from many quarters. Apart from those overtly associated with institutional religion or philosophical idealism, one could mention thinkers associated with the neo-liberal movement. Rougier was unusual in being associated both with logical positivism and with European neo-liberalism. There are marked parallels between Rougier's criticisms of central elements of logical positivism and those of another prominent member of the neo-liberal movement, Ludwig von Mises (whose brother Richard, incidentally, was involved with the Vienna Circle). The views of Ludwig von Mises were very close to Rougier's in a number of areas, and his views on materialism, mind and religion will be discussed in the latter part of this section.

Of those who, like Rougier, shared in the activities of the Vienna Circle and were critical of its central tenets, Popper, Wittgenstein and the Polish logicians are the most notable. I discussed the metaphysical views of some of the Polish logicians in the previous chapter.

Wittgenstein is, I think, a special case. His thought is less affected by the Platonic elements than by the Judaic elements of Christianity, and so he avoids any suggestion of Cartesian dualism or idealism. Also, he was actually hostile to science, unlike Rougier and the other figures I am discussing, who sought merely to limit science's pretensions.

Certainly, Karl Popper has more in common with Rougier than Wittgenstein does. Indeed Rougier and Popper could be seen to have certain deep affinities (though there are, as far as I know, no direct personal links as there were in the case of Rougier and Mises⁸). Their shared interests reveal not only a commitment to certain classical Greek values but also, perhaps, a similar metaphysical and even religious outlook. A comparison will help bring Rougier's views on a number of important issues into clearer focus.

Both Rougier and Popper were centrally concerned with political philosophy and the philosophy of science. In respect of the former, both wrote in defense of liberalism, though Rougier was

more conservative than Popper. Politically, Rougier was closest to Popper in his attitude to the Marxist philosophy of history, and totalitarianisms of the left and right, and his references to Popper relate mainly to the latter's attacks on 'historicism'. Their ideological links are underscored by personal associations with F.A. Hayek: Popper dedicated *Conjectures and refutations* to him, and Hayek introduced the American edition of Rougier's *The genius of the West* (1971).

Perhaps the most obvious parallel between the two thinkers relates to their ambivalent relationships with the Vienna Circle. Popper recalls (1972, p. 269n) that 'Neurath used to call me the "official opposition" of the Circle, although I was never so fortunate as to belong to it'. From the 1930s onwards, both Popper and Rougier attacked behaviourism, denying the doctrine of the unity of science and the notion of one universal language. In *Conjectures and refutations*, Popper equates physicalism with behaviourism and clearly rejects both (Popper 1972, p. 294). Rougier rejects behaviorism also, and exhibits anti-physicalist tendencies (see e.g. Rougier (1936) and (1938b)).

In respect of the philosophy of science, though Rougier did not, like Popper, reject induction, the two share common preoccupations and a general outlook. Both saw human imagination as the driving force of science, and the need to submit all conjectures to empirical tests.

In the manner of Rougier and the conventionalists, Popper often emphasized the limitations of scientific knowledge. He believed that scientific results are never conclusive, but are attempts to explain the known by the unknown, a process which, while it extends immeasurably the realm of the known (Popper 1972, p. 102), also raises many more questions. Popper refers to the

... *searchlight theory of science* – the view that science itself throws new light on things; that it not only solves problems, but that, in doing so, it creates many more ... (1972, pp. 127-128)

Rougier uses a similar metaphor – originally due to Pascal – to express the very same point:

... plus s'agrandit le champs lumineux de notre connaissance, plus s'élargit la zone d'ombre qui le cerne. (Rougier 1960, p. 78)

[... the more the luminous field of our knowledge grows, the larger becomes the zone of shadow which surrounds it.]

Again like Rougier, Popper disagrees profoundly with the spirit of Wittgenstein's dictum, 'The riddle does not exist' (Popper 1972, p. 105). Insoluble problems are not necessarily meaningless. There exist a great number of such problems, which are both real and unresolvable.

Metaphysically, Popper tended towards dualism, believing that the mind-body problem is rightly seen 'in approximately Cartesian form' (1972, p. 294). Also Popper was closely associated with the religious dualist John Eccles (with whom he wrote a book). Rougier, though he seems to flirt with dualism at times, and shows an increasing sympathy for Christian spirituality (insisting on maintaining a distinction between the spiritual and the temporal), is more ambivalent. As I have observed, he never really commits himself to an explicit metaphysical position.

Popper was clearly sympathetic to religion. Comments made by Popper in August 1992 in an interview with John Horgan underscore this fact. Popper, writes Horgan,

... believed that science could never answer questions about the meaning and purpose of the universe. For these reasons he had never completely repudiated religion, although he had long ago abandoned the Lutheranism of his youth. (Horgan 1996, p. 37)⁹

At the centre of Popper's vision is a profound reverence for the human mind. The achievements of science are 'witness to the intellectual conquest of the world by our minds' (Popper 1972, p. 102). A remark recorded by John Horgan is also worth noting, more for the manner of delivery than the bare words. Popper was insisting that the creative and speculative elements of science were essential to its 'marvelous history'.

Framing his face in his outstretched hands, Popper intoned, 'I believe in the human mind.' (Horgan 1996, p. 36)

This poignant faith in the human intellect as something at once limited and glorious is fully shared by Rougier. He makes the point most clearly perhaps in the long introduction he wrote to an edition of Poincaré's *La valeur de la science*. This essay stands both as an impressive summary and as a strong endorsement of Poincaré's basic philosophical outlook. A key theme is that science reveals where our greatness lies in spite of our infirmity (Poincaré 1947, p. 54). If it has disabused us of the fantasy of being physically at the centre of the universe, it has shown us

that our intellect can discover the universe's fundamental structure and measure its extent (Poincaré 1947, pp. 54-55).

This embracing of mind or consciousness as a – perhaps the most – significant feature of the universe contrasts starkly with the views of Russell who, still reacting perhaps against idealist views, wrote in his intellectual autobiography of the cosmic insignificance of consciousness.¹⁰ Popper, one suspects, would have wholeheartedly endorsed Poincaré's view of the matter (as expressed by Rougier):

Sans doute l'avènement de la conscience n'est qu'un bref épisode dans l'évolution silencieuse des mondes, mais sans elle tout se passerait comme si rien n'existait, si bien que c'est cet épisode qui est tout. (Poincaré 1947, p. 55)

[Doubtless the coming of consciousness is only a brief episode in the silent evolution of worlds; but, without it, it would be as if nothing existed, so that, in a sense, this brief episode is everything.]

Associated with Rougier's emphasis on the primacy of mind is his Hellenism. Popper too may be called a Hellenist, but in a more limited sense. Indeed it is on this issue that the differences as well as the similarities between Rougier and Popper become clear.

Simply, Popper's Hellenism lacks the aesthetic, cultural and religious dimensions of Rougier's, and doesn't go beyond the more intellectual Hellenism of Rougier's work on the Pythagoreans. Popper, like Rougier and many others, saw the Greeks as transcending the empirical but non-scientific astrology of the Babylonians (Popper 1957, pp. 156, 160). For Popper, the critical attitude is 'hellenic' (1957, p. 177).

Though both Rougier and Popper were aesthetic conservatives and hostile to the avant garde (Popper referred to abstract art as a tyrannical fashion (1972, p. 353)), it is clear that aesthetic factors are more significant for Rougier than for Popper. As is evident from his book on Celsus and other works such as the patriotic *La France en marbre blanc*, classical and Renaissance art, as well as literature and language, play an important role for Rougier in defining his social, political, cultural and religious ideals.

Ludwig von Mises is another figure exhibiting anti-physicalist tendencies to whom Rougier can be fruitfully compared. The views of Bertrand Russell will again serve as a touchstone.

If Rougier and Mises share, as I believe they do, certain fundamental attitudes and convictions, they certainly differ in their styles of communicating. While Rougier is oblique and evasive, Mises is refreshingly direct and explicit on fundamental issues. This fact, coupled with the personal links between the two thinkers (touched on in Chapter 11), makes a comparison all the more worthwhile.

Mises takes pains to distance himself from positivism and materialism, explicitly endorsing a 'methodological dualism' (Mises 1958, p. 1). For Mises, the science of human action (into which he incorporates history and his area of specialization, economics) must take account of human choice and value, whereas natural science excludes such considerations. The methods of natural science cannot – and will never, Mises suggests – explain human choice and action.

For Rougier, as for Mises, natural science does not encompass the realm of human action, choice and value.

Ces derniers sont une matière de fait à étudier, susceptible de donner lieu, à côté de la philosophie de la science, à une philosophie de l'action qui, tout en étant tributaire de la première, a ses tâches propres. (Rougier 1936, p. 195)

[[The realm of human choice and action] is a matter of fact which may be studied, and which may be seen to generate a philosophy of action to stand beside a philosophy of science, which, while drawing on the latter, has its own special tasks.]

What is particularly significant about this comment is that Rougier, like Mises, uses the term 'action' to delineate the human realm. This may well be an indication of Mises' direct influence on Rougier.

Mises defines his own position by contrasting it with Bertrand Russell's. Mises criticizes Russell for a tendency which pervades all his writings. (The citations are from Russell's *Religion and science* (1936).)

He wants to obliterate the difference between acting man and human action on the one hand and nonhuman events on the other hand. In his eyes 'the difference between us and a stone is only one of degree'; for 'we react to stimuli, and so do stones, though the

stimuli to which they react are fewer.' Lord Russell omits to mention the fundamental difference in the way stones and men 'react'. Stones react according to a perennial pattern, which we call a law of nature. Men do not react in such a uniform way... (Mises 1958, p. 92)

Mises expresses his concept of human freedom in a typically unimpassioned way: 'Nobody has ever succeeded in assigning various men to classes each member of which behaves according to the same pattern.' People behave 'in an individual way' (Mises 1958, p. 92).

Mises' rejection of behaviorism is reminiscent of Rougier's arguments, his appeal to Plato's account of Socrates' refusal to flee prison in the *Phaedo* as a definitive refutation of behaviorism (1938b, p. 193). Behaviorism, says Mises,

... avoids any reference to meaning or purpose. However, a situation cannot be described without analysing the meaning which the man concerned finds in it. If one avoids dealing with this meaning, one neglects the essential factor that decisively determines the mode of reaction. (Mises 1958, p. 246)

Mises' examples tend to be more mundane than Rougier's.

Consider a behaviourist describing the situation which an offer to sell brings about without reference to the meaning each party attaches to it! (Mises 1958, p. 246)

But even Mises, the cautious economist, appeals from time to time to matters less quotidian. He shares with Rougier -- and other European liberals of the period -- a strong emotional commitment to the cultural achievements of Western civilization.

[Behaviourism] seeks to investigate reflexes and instincts, automatisms and unconscious reactions. But it has told us nothing about the reflexes that have built cathedrals, railroads, and fortresses, the instincts that have produced philosophies, poems, and legal systems, the automatisms that have resulted in the growth and decline of empires, the unconscious reactions that are splitting atoms. (Mises 1958, p. 246)

A rejection of behaviorism is not, of course, tantamount to a rejection of physicalism (though both Rougier¹¹ and Popper conflated the two). What is significant is the predisposition of some thinkers (and Rougier, Popper and Mises are certainly amongst them) to reject the possibility of physicalist explanations for human capacities and achievements.

What is Mises' attitude to religion? He appears to espouse agnosticism (1958, p. 101), but some of his comments suggest a very high regard for religious doctrines. Though he rejects the mythic narratives of the fate of the soul, he notes that these 'rather crude representations' have been sublimated by religious doctrines and by idealistic philosophy (Mises 1958, pp. 99-100). Rejecting 'primitive descriptions of a realm of souls', he nonetheless insists that neither reason nor science is able 'to refute cogently the refined tenets of religious creeds'.

History can explode many of the historical narrations of theological literature. But higher criticism does not affect the core of the faith. Reason can neither prove nor disprove the essential religious doctrines. (Mises 1958, p. 100).

We have seen that Rougier refers to certain metaphysical theories (such as panpsychism) as being worthy of interest, though they are neither provable nor disprovable. He never referred, though, to religious doctrines in quite the way Mises does. He never referred, so far as I am aware, to any core of faith.

Rougier's relations with the Catholic Church have already been commented on. Like Rougier, Mises was deeply affected by Catholicism and Catholic philosophy without actually subscribing to Catholic doctrines. Tucker & Rockwell (1993, p. 315), while referring to Mises as non-religious, emphasize the importance of Catholicism in his thought. His parents were non-religious Jews, but the culture of the University of Vienna, where he studied, was heavily Catholic, and the tradition of economic thought of which he was a part was heavily influenced by Catholic philosophy. Its founder, Carl Menger, was a disciple of the Thomist philosopher Franz Brentano, and Menger's economic ideas 'have much in common with those of the late scholastics' (Tucker & Rockwell 1993, p. 315). Furthermore, Mises was a great admirer of the institutional structure of the Roman Catholic Church, and spoke highly of the 'princes of the Catholic Church'.

'Even in the most advanced countries they are worthy rivals of the most brilliant scholars, philosophers, scientists, and statesmen.' (Cited in Tucker & Rockwell 1993, p. 317)

In a passage from *Theory and history* which seems to echo the views of Renan and Rougier regarding the Roman Empire, Mises defends modern secularism as the only true guarantor of religious freedom. Modern secular individualism, wrote Mises,

... shattered the pretensions of those in power to impose their own creed upon their subjects. Religion is no longer the observance of articles enforced by constables and executioners. It is what a man, guided by his conscience, spontaneously espouses as his own faith. Modern Western civilisation is this-worldly. But it was precisely its secularism, its religious indifference, that gave rein to the renaissance of genuine religious feeling. (Mises 1958, p. 340)

In light of the obvious difficulties of discerning clearly Rougier's *Weltanschauung*, the words of Franz Cumont on the problems faced by the historian who attempts to define private beliefs seem *a propos*:

[N]othing escapes historical observation more easily than the intimate convictions of men, which they often hide even from those near them. (Cumont 1959, p. 2)

Nevertheless, if one is seeking to understand the fundamental motivations of a thinker, the question of 'intimate convictions' needs, I think, to be addressed.¹² In this chapter I have tried to address the question of Rougier's convictions both directly and obliquely through some comparisons with other thinkers. My conclusions may be summed up as follows.

Rougier early identified himself with classical Greek values and was often extremely critical of aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. But his criticisms were not all encompassing. They focused on two areas only, both related to his empiricism: the incompatibility of naive religious dogmas with science, and the powerlessness of reason alone to discover truth. Rougier's interest in and respect for certain modes of religious understanding remains, as does a reverence for the human mind and a strong belief in human dignity. Such beliefs, such convictions are, of course, not restricted to religious thinkers, but arguably their roots lie in religion. The humanist tradition sought – and still seeks – to preserve such notions, but it remains to be seen whether they can survive in a culture which has sloughed off the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions within which they arose.

Rougier remained strongly connected to these pre-modern traditions. His skepticism was real, but restrained. The intellectual landscape in which he exists is certainly not the pristine desert of the logical positivists, but rather a world which retains ancient and medieval institutions. He lives, like Renan, Cumont and Mises, very much in the shadow of Europe's classical and Christian heritage.¹³

The development of Rougier's social philosophy must be seen in the light of these religious interests and tendencies. His role in the development of European neo-liberalism, and his association with thinkers such as Walter Lippmann (who based his social philosophy on the notion of an objective spiritual reality) will otherwise be extremely difficult to explain. If one ignores, or doubts the existence of, the tendencies described in this chapter, one will see Rougier's social philosophy as being full of contradictions, and will be inclined to interpret Rougier merely as a cynical rhetorician, a devious conspirator (as indeed does Gilles Bounoure).

Interestingly, the political and cultural movement to which Rougier contributed late in life, the so-called (French) New Right, operated, and still operates, within a framework of religious thought (though not within a Christian framework). The movement's religious orientation may well be seen to derive, at least in part, from Rougier's influence.

These and other matters pertaining to Rougier's social philosophy are discussed in Part 4.

¹ A "faith" in human freedom is evident in secular philosophers of various traditions, and it is difficult to divorce this emphasis entirely from the Judeo-Christian tradition. The existentialist tradition had a Christian wing, but even its secular representatives – like Sartre – were arguably indebted to religious notions and modes of thought.

² His apparent endorsement of Schopenhauer's view of philosophical systems as expressions of temperament is discussed below.

³ The idea of metaphysician as poet was one of Renan's notions: he saw religions as popular poems, and systems of metaphysics as learned poems (Lévy-Bruhl 1924, p. 417). (Camap too saw metaphysics as poetry – see Nieli (1987, p. 7).)

⁴ Vico's most influential work.

⁵ See the account of Jordan & Orr (1970, pp. 86 ff.).

⁶ For Vossler, see Jordan & Orr (1970, p. 98); see also Rougier (1947, pp. 112-113).

⁷ Vossler sought an explanation for the clarity of French syntax in 'the Frenchman's love for logic and regularity'. See Jordan & Orr (1970, p. 88).

⁸ Or in the case of Rougier and Franz Cumont. Cumont's views are discussed in note 12 below.

⁹ Popper's parents were Austrian Jews who had converted to Lutheranism (Popper 1982, p. 105).

¹⁰ Russell's antagonism to Kant, evident in the chapter on Kant in Russell (1961), is also significant in this context.

¹¹ Rougier saw the famous passage in the *Phaedo* as a refutation not only of behaviorism but also of physicalism (Rougier 1938b, p. 193).

¹² The case of Cumont himself – a friend and mentor of Rougier's – is an interesting one. Cumont wrote as a skeptic on the history of religion and was seen as an underminer of Christian beliefs, though he generally avoided discussing Christianity directly. Before his death, he was reconciled to the Catholic Church, but this was not, I think, the deathbed conversion which it has been portrayed as (by Bounoure (1987, p. 148) for example). Not only his last writings, but also much earlier works, such as the Yale lectures, first published in 1922, show that he took very seriously the spiritual claims of neo-Platonism, even perhaps of Catholic Christianity which incorporates so much of the heritage of Platonism. His last work was an expanded and revised version of the Yale lectures, which, against the advice of his friends, he retitled *Lux perpetua*, and which ends with an extremely sympathetic treatment of Plotinus. The title phrase is taken from a passage from a Jewish apocryphal work – clearly influenced by neo-Platonic ideas – which was early incorporated into the Roman Catholic Requiem. So, just as Rougier saw the fact that the Catholic Church embodied pagan and classical elements as a positive feature of Roman Catholicism, Cumont seems to have been attracted to the Platonic and mystical elements of the Church. Indeed, he would appear to have justified his final reconciliation with the Church on such grounds. He died, in

effect, a Christian Platonist. (No conclusions can be drawn from this, of course, concerning Rougier's beliefs. The case of Franz Cumont is at best suggestive.)

¹³ Guglielmo Ferrero and Romain Rolland were two other figures with significant links to Rougier whose intellectual lives were marked by similar classical elements. (See Chapter 9.)

PART FOUR: SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Chapter 8

Early social and political views

Rougier's social philosophy is central to his thinking, and its roots will already be evident. His deeply felt social views were driven largely by a complex of cultural and intellectual factors: his Hellenism, his view of reason and science as essentially progressive forces, his rejection of traditional metaphysics (with its reduction of humanity to an abstract essence), his commitment to tolerance and intellectual freedom, elements of idealism, and his debt to aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Rougier's peculiar brand of liberalism incorporates aristocratic and technocratic elements, reflecting the everpresent tension between classical and positivistic elements in his thought. Further complicating the picture is his ambivalent attitude towards religion – specifically towards Christianity. Rougier's social and political views must often be interpreted in the light of underlying ideological and religious notions. It will be recalled, for instance, that his call for tolerance and an acceptance of diversity in matters of religion and belief in *Celse contre les chrétiens* seems to be based not just on humane sentiments or practical considerations but also on the notion of a "hidden god".

I seek in what follows to provide a tentative exposition and analysis of Rougier's social views. But before looking directly at Rougier's early writings on social and political themes, it seems appropriate to say a few words about the general social and political views of two thinkers who did much to shape the young Rougier's views on culture and society, Ernest Renan and Hippolyte Taine. In subsequent chapters, subtle shifts in Rougier's social thinking will be discussed, and further comparisons made.

Rougier's debts to Renan in the areas of the history of religion and culture have already been examined, and it will already be clear that each of the notions listed at the beginning of this chapter as having determined Rougier's social views may be found in the thought of Renan. The latter's explicitly articulated social and political views trace a tortuous course.

As a young man, Renan replaced his faith in Catholic Christianity with a naive faith in science, believing that the progress of science would somehow resolve social problems and inequalities. Subsequently he moved to a more classically liberal position. *Questions contemporaines*, a collection of essays published in 1868, reflects this tradition, appealing to such figures as Montesquieu, Turgot and Tocqueville (Renan 1947, p. 65). In this book, Renan argues for a free and tolerant society, and warns against the excesses of both church and state power. He is very critical of religious institutions, and particularly of the Catholic Church. For example, in an essay first published in 1848, he argues that "clerical liberalism" is a sham, little more than an opportunistic strategy on the part of an institution in no way committed to liberal principles (Renan 1947, pp. 306-307).

But, as Chadbourne (1968, p. 92) points out in his discussion of these essays, Renan was also opposed 'to the concept of an all-powerful state charged with administering freedom and justice according to abstract, a priori principles'. This concept, which Renan associated with Rousseau and the French revolutionaries, was perceived as dangerous. According to Renan in his liberal (or liberal conservative) mode, centralized power must be checked by the free play of autonomous institutions within the state or repression and instability would result.

La stabilité des gouvernements (M. de Tocqueville l'a établi) est en raison inverse de leur puissance, ou, pour mieux dire, de l'étendue de leur action.

(Renan 1947, p. 65)

[Tocqueville has established that the stability of governments stands in an inverse relation to their power, or, better, to the extent or scope of their actions.]

In some of his later writings, Renan's liberal views were eclipsed by authoritarian and conservative tendencies. For example, reacting to the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war, Renan saw a need for his country to restructure itself more or less on the German model. In *La réforme intellectuelle et morale*, he advocated the restoration of a strongly authoritarian monarchy, supported by a hierarchy comprising the nobility, scientists, scholars and the army.¹ But, though positive about many aspects of German culture, Renan denounced German racial politics and political mysticism.²

Renan, then, came to see progress and democracy as ultimately incompatible, and opted for the former over the latter. The socialistic and democratic views of his youth could not (as he saw it)

be sustained, and he came to believe that a future scientific society would retain elitist structures, with an ignorant mass being ruled over by an intelligent aristocracy.

Rougier shared Renan's ambivalence concerning democracy, seeing simple majoritarian democracy as a form of tyranny, and seeing certain democratic principles as being based on abstract, *a priori* notions of human nature which were both false and dangerous.³ Like Renan, he saw a need for strong intermediary institutions.⁴ Rougier also believed that professional and other elites needed to be maintained in order to enhance social and scientific progress. And, as we will see, he draws explicitly on Renan in his denunciations of German racial politics.

Taine is often grouped with Renan in surveys of intellectual history. Petitfils (1983, p. 17) mentions Taine and Renan together as having rejected the basic principles of the Revolution (democracy, universal suffrage, individualism and egalitarianism). Rougier often matches a quotation from the one with a quotation from the other. But though Renan and Taine are united in their political conservatism and critical attitude to the principles of the French revolution, Taine differs from Renan in that he is a more rigorously secular thinker.

Nietzsche's comments on the two French thinkers throw some light on the differences between them, or at least on perceived differences from the point of view of someone who was famously hostile to Christianity and the Christian order of values. Nietzsche criticized Renan severely. In *The twilight of the idols*, he asserts that Renan, 'in those rare cases where he ventures to say either Yes or No on a general question, invariably misses the point...' (Nietzsche 1974b, p. 60). For instance, Renan associates science with nobility, whereas for Nietzsche it is 'obvious that science is democratic' (1974b, p. 60). Though 'actuated by a strong desire to represent an aristocracy of intellect', Renan remains committed to 'the opposite doctrine, the gospel of the humble'.

What is the good of all free-spiritedness, modernity, mockery and acrobatic suppleness, if in one's belly one is still a Christian, a Catholic, and even a priest! (Nietzsche 1974b, p. 61)

By contrast, Nietzsche made no such criticisms of Taine, to whom indeed he was arguably indebted. In *Beyond good and evil* he called him the greatest living historian (Nietzsche 1974a, p. 214).

Though little discussed today, Taine was a major intellectual presence in the later 19th century. He was the first popular and successful critic of the eclectic, spiritualist and introspective philosophy (associated with Victor Cousin) that had dominated French philosophy for decades. Anatole France wrote at Taine's death in 1893 that he had inspired an entire generation with a

'... dynamic cult of life. What he brought us was method and observation, it was a question of fact and idea, of philosophy and history, in short it was science. He set us free from ... odious academic spiritualism, from the abominable Victor Cousin and his abominable school ... he delivered us from hypocritical philosophism.' (Cited Aarsleff (1982, p. 361).)

Taine was a positivist insofar as he advocated – and practised – the application of scientific methods to human and social studies. He worked mainly in the areas of history, literary history and psychology. But he rejected Comte's ban on studying the mind, as distinct from the brain, and so, while certainly an advocate of naturalism, was therefore not a strict positivist.⁵ The mind and mental structures were a central focus of his thought.

Some commentators⁶ see Taine's work as prefiguring 20th century structuralism, as he saw culture as a total system. Certainly, he was a pioneer of new methods in the social sciences. As an historian, Taine downplayed the importance of the decisions and actions of political leaders and statesmen, emphasizing underlying social pressures and forces as the decisive influences shaping political systems and constitutions.

These pressures and forces are not entirely material. Taine assumes that every people (or race) carries 'some very general disposition of mind and soul' which has innate elements but which may be modified by external circumstances (Taine 1873, p. 16). All history results from the interplay of the innate tendencies of race with two other forces: surroundings and epoch (Taine 1873, p. 17).⁷

Taine believed that literature is a far more reliable witness to the motivating forces of history than more traditional historical sources. His *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* is more than a literary history – rather it is an attempt to define the character or psychology of the English people (Taine 1873, p. 35). One can discern here – and in Taine's more general concern with mind – traces of idealism. Indeed, there are many sections of the *Histoire* which suggest Taine's idealistic tendencies. In the manner of the idealistic school of cultural and linguistic thought, he often speaks of the spirit or genius of various peoples. For example, he discusses

the internal psychological conflicts or “contrariedades” which arose when ‘in the seventeenth century the harsh and lonely English genius tried blunderingly to adopt a new-born politeness’, or when, in the previous century, ‘the lucid and prosaic French spirit tried vainly to bring forth a living poetry’ (Taine 1873, p. 24).⁸

The similarities with Rougier are obvious, and Rougier’s indebtedness to Taine is not in dispute. Both thinkers focused on the mind (rather than the brain) and mixed empiricism with rationalistic and idealistic elements.

Rougier’s historical focus also owes much to Taine, as, arguably do many specific themes and emphases. For example, Taine’s emphasis on the diversity of races and civilizations may be seen as a source of Rougier’s ideas on cultural and racial diversity. We have noted that Rougier appears to be indebted to Taine’s history of mentalities program. Also, the Nietzschean elements in Rougier’s thought may derive at least in part from Taine. Rougier’s rhetoric extolling life and human striving arguably owes much to Taine’s ‘dynamic cult of life’. Rougier also shared Taine’s antagonism to ‘academic spiritualism’, and, indeed, created problems for himself by alienating the 20th century inheritors of the tradition of the ‘abominable’ Victor Cousin.⁹

In terms of his influence on Rougier, Taine may be seen as a sort of counterbalance to Renan (with his Christian sympathies). Rougier’s first major work (1920a) was dedicated to the memory of Taine, and the influence persists but diminishes in importance to the extent that Rougier assimilates an outlook more compatible with at least some elements of Christianity. Nonetheless, Taine is present in Rougier’s last book in the form of a quotation which encapsulates the bleak, uncompromising vision which Rougier clearly had not entirely renounced.

‘Ce n’est pas le malheur, c’est le bonheur qui est contre nature. La condition naturelle d’un homme, comme d’un animal, c’est d’être assommé et de mourir de faim.’

[‘It is not misfortune but happiness which is against nature. The natural condition of man – like an animal – is to be slaughtered or to die of hunger.’]

Rougier continues, at once accepting and challenging Taine’s grim assessment:

L'homme, confiant dans la puissance de sa pensée, a engagé un pari qui semblait perdu d'avance, celui d'améliorer sans cesse sa condition. (Rougier 1979, p. 264).

[Man, trusting in the power of his thought, took a wager which seemed lost in advance, that he could ceaselessly ameliorate his condition.]

Rougier appears to have vacillated between Taine's bleaker view of the human condition and Renan's more spiritual and optimistic outlook.¹⁰ His social philosophy can be understood only in the light of the French intellectual tradition epitomized by these two 19th century thinkers. From this tradition, Rougier came to emphasize certain themes – respect for cultural traditions and their variety, a commitment to elitism, controversial (to say the least) views on race, and elements of positivism and idealism.

These themes were taken up in the latter half of the 20th century – partly through Rougier's direct influence – by the European New Right. Rougier is surely significant in other ways also, but his role as a link between the 19th century French revival of Enlightenment thought as epitomized in the thought of Renan and Taine and the twentieth century is undeniable and worthy of attention.¹¹

Since attitudes to the Revolution are a crucial indicator of political and social ideology in France (and, for that matter, in European and Western thought generally), it is important to note Rougier's views on the matter. Though one should not underestimate his strong conservative tendencies, Rougier is not content with the traditional conservative's plaint and defense of the *ancien régime*. He sees the Revolution as embodying both positive and negative elements.

In a 21 page essay included in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a) as Appendix A and titled 'Le socialisme et la Révolution française', he defends his assertion in the body of the work that classical rationalism gave birth to the Revolutionary ideology which in turn led to egalitarian socialism. The Revolution bore within it the seeds of future communist revolutions (1920a, pp. 491 ff.). But it was influenced by 18th century individualism as well as collectivism (Rougier 1920a, pp. 478-479). During the Reign of Terror, liberal elements were jettisoned in favour of a violent collectivism. In the name of the Jacobinic state, the revolutionary government confiscated fortunes, imposed extraordinary taxes and took other extreme anti-liberal measures (Rougier 1920a, p. 485).

Rougier is keen to defend traditional liberal notions of limited government and property rights (supported by Montesquieu, for example) against collectivist ideology (implicit, for example, in the thought of Rousseau) (Rougier 1920a, pp. 494-495). Responding to André Lichtenberger's view that the social reforms that took place during the Revolution were not the result of socialist doctrines but rather exceptional measures of public salvation occasioned by financial distress, hunger, anarchy, and civil and international war, he writes:

A ce jugement, il nous paraît difficile de souscrire, car il est deux principes, formulés par les hommes de la Révolution, qui sont l'essence même du socialisme. (Rougier 1920a, p. 493)

[This interpretation appears to me quite implausible because two principles formulated by the men of the revolution are the very essence of socialism.]

The fact that the first of these two 'principles' immediately becomes a 'dogma' indicates clearly enough Rougier's personal feelings on the matter. The two Revolutionary doctrines in question, doctrines which bear the seeds of socialism, are the dogma of equality and the principle of the sovereignty of the people. The former is Rougier's *bête noire*, and a constant theme of his writing; with respect to the latter principle, he notes that in passing from the king to the people, sovereignty became more absolute and despotic, as the monarch's power was limited by a range of traditional conventions, interests and institutions, such as the clergy and the nobility (Rougier 1920a, p. 495).

Rougier concludes his piece on the French Revolution with a quote from Nietzsche which presents socialism as a new manifestation of an older despotism, but worse than the older forms of absolutism because it works towards the formal annihilation of the individual (Rougier 1920a, p. 497).

On the whole, individualism is a concept which has been treated with some caution by French thinkers. Steven Lukes' influential study of the concept provides a useful overview. According to Lukes, the French have traditionally distinguished between *individualisme* and *individuaîté*, the former carrying negative, the latter positive connotations (1973, pp. 8 ff.). Individualism was seen to lead to social disintegration, and attacked from the right and the left. De Maistre spoke scathingly of 'political protestantism carried to the most absolute individualism' (Lukes 1973, p. 4). Saint-Simon also attacked the Enlightenment's glorification of the individual, and

his followers developed an influential secular religion based on a particular notion of progress. History was a cycle of critical and organic periods.

The former were 'filled with disorder; they destroy former social relations, and everywhere tend towards egoism'; the latter were unified, organized and stable (the previous instances in Europe being the ancient polytheistic preclassical society and the Christian Middle Ages). (Lukes 1973, pp. 6-7)

The views of socialist Louis Blanc echo those of Saint-Simon to some extent.

Louis Blanc saw individualism as a major cultural principle, encompassing Protestantism, the Bourgeoisie and the Enlightenment, bringing a historically necessary, though false and incomplete, freedom. (Lukes 1973, p. 11)

Such freedom had to be transcended before a new age of socialist 'fraternity' could dawn.

Even classical French liberals like Benjamin Constant [1767-1830] and Alexis de Tocqueville [1805-1859] shared this rejection of atomistic individualism. Constant encapsulated his view in a neat metaphor (cited by Lukes (1973, p. 12)): '... when all are isolated by egoism, there is nothing but dust, and at the advent of a storm, nothing but mire'. In fact, Constant, though writing at a much earlier time than Rougier, developed what is in essence a strikingly modern and sophisticated critique of revolutionary politics. His views on popular sovereignty prefigured Rougier's. Constant insisted that sovereignty was not, as Rousseau had assumed, absolute and indivisible. According to Noel O'Sullivan (1976, p. 47), the unifying theme of Constant's political thought is that power should be limited and that the conception of absolute sovereignty, is, in all its forms, including the democratic one, an abomination. Constant may well have been a major influence on Rougier: certainly, their views on this matter, at any rate, are very close. And, in a late work, Rougier quotes with approval a passage from Constant's *Principes de politique* on the tendency of persecutors to provoke resistance.

'Il y a dans l'homme un principe de révolte contre toute contrainte intellectuelle. Ce principe peut aller jusqu'à la fureur; mais il tient à ce qu'il y a de noble au fond de notre âme.' (Rougier 1979a, p. 95)

[There dwells within man a principle which rejects all intellectual constraints. This principle may lead to extreme and frenzied responses, but it affirms the essential nobility of the human soul.]

Tocqueville, too, saw individualism – involving the withdrawal of individuals from public life into a private sphere – as leading not only to isolation and a weakening of social bonds, but also to the unchecked growth of the political power of the state. Democracy inevitably tends in this direction. Tocqueville, like Rougier, sees the need for a system of intermediary groups ‘to provide a framework for the individual and protection against the State’ (Lukes 1973, p. 14).

Rougier’s liberalism developed during the 1920s. The mature liberalism of his middle period will be discussed in Chapter 11. His early social and political views – as some other sections of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* attest – are not entirely liberal, and his antipathy towards notions of equality and majoritarian democracy is sometimes expressed in passionate terms.

In a section of the introduction of *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* entitled ‘Les dangers du rationalisme’, Rougier argues that modern nations have granted legislative power to (necessarily) irresponsible and incompetent majorities just when the political and moral sciences were revealing that government requires the sort of skill and specialist knowledge (‘compétence’) which is necessarily the preserve of carefully selected and educated minorities. Universal suffrage leads to the triumph of party politics, particular interests, passion and ignorance over scientific discernment of the public good and of the appropriate means to achieve that good (Rougier 1920a, p. 49). In Taine’s words: ‘Dix millions d’ignorances ne font pas un savoir.’

Not only is elitism a necessary element in a culture which aspires to great achievements, egalitarianism positively dangerous. Taine believed that universal suffrage led inevitably to war (Nisbet 1974, pp. 77-78). Interestingly Simone Weil had similar views, defending the notion of hierarchy, and seeing ‘equalisation’ as a force for instability. Like Taine and Rougier, she feared the collapse of the civilised order (Tomlin 1954, pp. 57-58).

The following sentence from *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* goes some way towards encapsulating Rougier’s entire social vision :

La science, l’art, la moralité, l’élaboration d’un idéal supérieur, le style qui crée une culture, la haute politique, la grande industrie, l’organisation, les vues profondes, le

respect des traditions séculaires, le sens des destinées historiques d'une nation, le talent de tempérer les impatiences du présent en vue de ménager les possibilités de l'avenir, celui de dépasser les mesquines entreprises d'un empirisme journalier pour sauvegarder les exigences d'un développement ultérieur, le don de clairvoyance et de discernement furent toujours le privilège d'un magistère, l'apanage d'une minorité fort restreinte, gardant la tradition du vrai, du bien et du beau. (Rougier 1920a, p. 50)

[Science, art, morality, the elaboration of a superior ideal, culture-creating style, high politics, large-scale industry, organization, profound insights, respect for secular traditions, the sense of a nation's historic destiny, the ability to temper impatience to deal with immediate problems with a view to protecting future possibilities, to go beyond the narrow undertakings of a fickle empiricism to safeguard the exigencies of long-term development: such gifts of clear-sightedness and discernment were always the preserve of a tiny elite committed to protecting the tradition of the true, the good and the beautiful.]

Significantly, Rougier does not extol, as Wittgenstein might, a respect for traditions, but rather for *secular* traditions. Rougier's ideal is certainly not a Christian one. It is based largely on classical aristocratic values.

There are also Romantic elements implicit in the phrase 'destinées historiques d'une nation'. Again, Renan's influence may well be behind this tendency to spiritualize nationalism. In an essay in his *Discours et conférences*, Renan presents the nation as a spiritual principle, a form of moral consciousness which is defined in terms of tradition – a common legacy of memories and a continuing will to build on past achievements. (See Chadbourne (1968, p. 101).)¹²

Other passages from the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* owe more to the thought of Nietzsche and Taine than to Renan.

Rejecting the notion of the general will, Rougier insists on a differentiation between the governed and their rulers (Rougier 1920a, p. 51). Rulers mustn't simply seek passively to obey the will of the governed, which, in so far as it exists at all, is variable, capricious, incoherent and contradictory; rather they should assume the responsibility of bending to their will the malleable mass of the nation (Rougier 1920a, pp. 51-52). Power derives its value from the seriousness, the knowledge and the energy of the elite that exercises it. And an elite dispossesses itself if it relaxes its will to power. Rougier proceeds to rehearse his Nietzschean

theme regarding the destructive power of scruples. If the rulers start anxiously examining themselves regarding their right to rule, if they lose a taste for their responsibilities and their pride in their privileges, they end up talking only of abnegation and renunciation in favour of the lowest strata of the population. This involves a failure to fulfil their sacred mission (Rougier 1920a, p. 52). The term ('mission sacré') is an interesting one and represents more, I think, than rhetorical exuberance. The mystical dimension of Rougier's thought is again evident.

What then is this sacred mission? Essentially, it is the conservation of the elite which is based upon, and which depends upon for its continuance, a long and painstaking process of selection. By seeing the undifferentiated mass of the population as interesting or worthy of attention, the elite is failing in its duty to perpetuate itself, to maintain what has been so painfully achieved and to recruit for the future. Rougier writes:

Le signe manifeste de [la] déchéance irrémédiable [de l'élite] est une mièvre sensiblerie, une sorte de comédie larmoyante, où elle s'attendrit immodérément sur le sort des déclassés, épaves inutiles que rejette sur ses bords le fleuve indomptable de la vie. (Rougier 1920a, p. 52)

[The clear sign of the irremedial decadence of the elite is an affectedly tender and mawkish sentimentality, a kind of pathetic comedy whereby the elite is consumed with pity for the fate of the socially fallen whom the indomitable river of life throws up on its banks like worthless jetsam.]

Rougier again quotes Taine. Very much in the same spirit as Rougier, Taine regrets the late 18th century softening of manners in the upper – and even in the middle – class which led to a horror of blood and a weakening of the militant will. The moral status of the target of his non-compassion is, however, subtly different from that of the target of Rougier's non-compassion. Where Rougier's target is the mere unfortunate, Taine's is the rebel. The rebel, whatever the rights or wrongs of his cause, poses an active threat to the *status quo*, and is a more worthy antagonist.

'Partout, les magistrats oubliaient que le maintien de la société et de la civilisation est un bien infiniment supérieur à la vie d'une poignée de malfaiteurs et de fous, que l'objet principal du gouvernement, comme de la gendarmerie, est la préservation de l'ordre par la force.' (Cited in Rougier (1920a, p. 52).)

[Everywhere the magistrates forgot that the defense of the society and of civilization is an infinitely superior good than the lives of a handful of malefactors and fools, that the principle object of the government -- as of the gendarmerie -- is the preservation of order by force.]

Rougier's apparent advocacy of force, and his anti-humanitarian rhetoric, must, of course, be seen in the context of the time. In the wake of the disaster of the World War, the ideals of many had been shattered, and a large section of the intellectual mainstream felt that drastic measures were needed if the heritage of Western civilization was to be preserved. The notion that sentimentalism was rife, and inimical to responsible social thought, was a common one in Europe and Britain between the wars, especially amongst thinkers who valued science.

The eugenics movement thrived in this climate of thought. Bertrand Russell was not unusual in being an advocate of eugenics. Likewise, the astronomer and writer Sir James Jeans was a highly respected figure whose views were representative of a significant segment of educated opinion. A sceptic sympathetic to idealist philosophy, he did not shy away from social comment. He was critical of the system of social assistance which encouraged the least successful portions of the community to have children, and feared that the England of the future would consist too largely of hospitals, prisons and lunatic asylums.

This is the price our children will have to pay for our irresponsible humanitarianism and sentimentalism; these have held almost undisputed sway in recent years. I believe there is a vigorous reaction against them in the rising generation, but the real irresistible reaction is yet to come, I think. It will come with overwhelming force as soon as the average hard-working, self-respecting citizen begins to realize how great an incubus the unfit and defective, the unenterprising and incapable, form on the prosperity and wealth of the nation... (Einstein et al. 1931, p. 112)

Jeans was a somewhat reluctant democrat. Like Rougier, he believed that only government based on reason and knowledge would lead to sustained progress, and democracy 'encourages the nimble charlatan at the expense of the thinker' (Einstein et al. 1931, p. 113). Any significant influence (either way) is unlikely. I mention Jeans merely as evidence of a particular intellectual tradition, though, as a matter of fact, Rougier did read Jeans. He cites him on the apparent hostility of the universe to life (Rougier 1986, p. 37).

Aldous Huxley's debt to the thought of Rougier might be mentioned in this context. Huxley was certainly a mainstream intellectual, and, clearly, he was in no way alienated by Rougier's anti-democratic rhetoric. Indeed, writing in the mid-1920s, he explicitly acknowledges his 'great debt' to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, which he describes as a 'very remarkable and too little known book' and as 'a model of lucid analysis and elegant composition' (Huxley 1949, p. xviii). There are many convergences between Rougier's and Huxley's thinking: their views on art, on the American business culture, their emphasis on the profound differences between modes of thought¹³. Huxley follows Rougier in affirming that the practical (political) effects of metaphysical beliefs are often felt (and only felt) centuries after the ideas are initially elaborated. The metaphysical belief with which he is particularly concerned relates to the egalitarianism which both he and Rougier see as being implicit in classical rationalism. A fundamental tenet of Aristotle's metaphysical system, writes Huxley, is 'that specific qualities are the same for every member of a species. Individuals of one species are the same in essence or substance' (1949, p. 5). Aristotle, of course, did not draw the appropriate conclusion, but this fact just shows our capacity to believe contradictory things.

... Aristotle the slave-owner believed that some men are born to command and others to serve; Aristotle the metaphysician, thinking in the abstract, and unaffected by social prejudices which influenced the slave-owner, expounded a doctrine of specific essences, which entailed belief in the real and substantial equality of all human beings. The opinion of the slave-owner was probably nearer the truth than that of the metaphysician. But it is by the metaphysician's doctrine that our lives are influenced today. (Huxley 1949, pp. 6-7)

In his later years, Rougier (like Huxley) softened his opposition to democracy. For example, he was soon to reject explicitly a view of government based on force. Though elitist themes persist, Rougier comes to appreciate the nobler and gentler elements in the classical and Christian traditions. Rougier's association with two older contemporaries, Guglielmo Ferrero and Romain Rolland, may well have played a part in this development. Rougier certainly utilized some of Ferrero's ideas. A brief examination of the nature of Rougier's relations with these two figures cannot help but elucidate his developing social philosophy and his general position in the spectrum of pre-World War II European thought.

¹ Chadbourne (1968, p. 94) characterizes this arrangement as 'both a parody of the *ancien régime* and a prototype of the fascist state'. See also Renan (1947, pp. 370-371).

² For a brief account, see Chapter 13.

³ These views are evident in *Les paralogisms du rationalisme* (1920a); see Chapter 1 and discussion below.

⁴ See Chapter 11.

⁵ Indeed, the very fact that he practised the discipline of history in the way he did distances him from mainstream positivism.

⁶ See, for example, Aarsleff (1982).

⁷ Taine's views on race – a topic which is discussed in terms of its relevance to social and cultural themes in Chapter 13 – are quite explicit, and the diversity of races and epochs is a constant theme. 'What we call the race are the innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him into the world, and which, as a rule, are united with the marked differences in the temperament and structure of the body. They vary with various peoples.' (Taine 1873, p. 17)

⁸ Significantly, he draws explicitly on Renan's work on Semitic languages (Taine 1873, p. 25). We have previously noted Renan's idealism.

⁹ See the account of Alain de Benoist in his introduction to the reissue of Rougier's *Celse contre les chrétiens* (1997, pp. XVII ff.), which documents Rougier's running battles with influential figures such as Brunschvicg (whom Rougier accused of scholarly fraud in respect of a work on Pascal).

¹⁰ It would be a mistake, however, to exaggerate the differences between Taine and Renan. In the end, they may be more stylistic and temperamental than substantive. Renan's elitism is more reluctant than that of Taine. Renan had, it might be argued, the instincts of a socialist (or a Christian humanist?), though he came to reject socialist ideals as unattainable. Lévy-Bruhl makes the point that Renan's general optimism 'could not prevent him from being aware alike of the folly of the revolutionists and of the selfish absurdity of conservatives' (1924, p. 415).

¹¹ Rougier's relations with the French New Right are discussed in Chapter 12.

¹² Rougier's French nationalism shades into something broader, being, as we have seen, strangely generalized and idealized; for Rougier saw France as the inheritor *par excellence* of the spirit and values of ancient Greece

¹³ Huxley puts the point dramatically: 'Few things are more disquieting than to discover, on the evidence of some casual remark, that you are talking to a person whose mind is radically alien to your own. Between one easy chair in front of the fire and another a gulf suddenly yawns; you must have a strong head to be able to look into it without feeling giddy' (Huxley 1949, p. 51).

Chapter 9

Rougier, Ferrero and Rolland

On Rougier's relations with Ferrero we have a document unique in Rougier's oeuvre, a memoir (in fact, a chapter of *La France en marbre blanc*) which, though very brief, reveals something, I think, of Rougier's character as well as clarifying his political position.

Rougier published little of an autobiographical nature, and – as we saw in Chapter 7 – he generally avoids introspection and direct statements of personal belief. Consequently, one is forced to look to his relations with and attitudes to others in order to get a clear picture of his intellectual and personal characteristics. When he praises a figure, such as Celsus, for example, or Renan, he is revealing his own ideals and something of himself. Ferrero is another such figure, but one whom Rougier knew as a friend as well as an author.

Ferrero as portrayed by Rougier – and I think also in reality – was a larger-than-life figure who has an eerie resemblance to a character (Settembrini) in Thomas Mann's *The magic mountain* [first published 1924]. Indeed, Ferrero was well known when Mann was writing the novel, and could conceivably have served as a partial inspiration for the character.¹

Whether or not there is any direct causal link between the man and the character, Ferrero is clearly related spiritually to Mann's Settembrini, and, as such, stands as something of a symbolic type – as indeed Rougier portrays him. Moreover, the world conjured up by Rougier in the memoir is very much the world of *The magic mountain*, where an intermingling of the intellectual and the intimate, the political and the personal, the comic and the tragic, serves to define a unique moment in European social and intellectual history.

Rougier opens his memoir with a lament for a figure who symbolized a world which had passed away:

Au cours de l'été 1942, dans une paisible villégiature de la Suisse romande, s'éteignait comme un sage antique, chargé de travaux et de jours, Guglielmo Ferrero. Avec lui disparaissait un des hommes les plus représentatifs d'une Europe libérale, bourgeoise, cosmopolite et cultivée, que nous ne reverrons plus. (Rougier 1947, p. 91)

[In the course of the summer of 1942, in a peaceful, rural corner of French-speaking Switzerland, Guglielmo Ferrero passed away like a sage of the ancient world, weighed down by work and the passing years. And so disappeared a man who typified a liberal, bourgeois, cosmopolitan and cultivated Europe which we will never see again.]

Before launching into an account of the events surrounding their association, Rougier gives an extensive summary of his ideas, and claims that he should be ranked with the great philosophers of history: Vico, Burckhardt, Ortega y Gasset, Spengler, Toynbee and Huizinga (1947, p. 102).

The work which made Ferrero's name was a Roman history which highlighted a paradox that underlay the Roman Empire: that the value systems of the great classical Roman writers were conservative and rural, emphasizing moderation, modesty, respect for ancestral ways; and naturally antagonistic to the very notion of empire, and the wealth, power and luxury with which it is inevitably associated (Rougier 1947, pp. 92-93).

... [L]es Romains manifestaient en politique le même esprit que les Grecs en matière d'esthétique et de morale, l'esprit de mesure et de pondération. (Rougier 1947, p. 93)

[The Romans displayed in politics the same spirit that the Greeks displayed in aesthetics and morality – a spirit of moderation and balance.]

The Roman Empire was so long-lasting because, in the Romans, a concern for governing themselves according to ideals of moral perfection, wisdom and equity prevailed over a desire for power and wealth (Rougier 1947, p. 94).

In later writings, Ferrero broadened his range of concerns and wrote extensively on the United States and modern European cultures, maintaining, however, the same essential dichotomy between moderation and excess. The United States, above all, represented the modern view whereby progress was identified precisely with that which represented, for the ancients (and modern advocates of "qualitative" civilization), decadence or corruption.

... [L]es Modernes appellent progrès précisément ce que les Anciens appelaient corruption: l'accroissement des richesses, la fièvre des jouissances, le désir de parvenir, le confort et le luxe, et surtout la puissance prométhéenne que la science confère à l'homme en lui permettant d'assujettir les forces de la nature... (Rougier 1947, p. 95)

[The Moderns call progress precisely what the Ancients call corruption: increasing opulence, the restless search for pleasure, the desire for success, comfort and luxury, and, above all, the Promethean power which science confers on man by allowing him to subjugate the forces of nature...]

This concern with decadence and corruption has been seen by some commentators as a mark of reactionary, radical or extreme views, and it may be that Ferrero's views do indeed incorporate some reactionary elements.²

Ferrero's notion of progress leads inevitably to quantitative civilisations, whereas qualitative civilisations are associated with an entirely different set of values.

Les civilisations qualitatives proposent la beauté, la vertu, la justice, la perfection morale et la contemplation intellectuelle comme but suprême à nos efforts. Elles ont créé des religions consolantes, des morales accomplies, des codes et des institutions exemplaires, des théories scientifiques et des genres littéraires; elles ont produit des héros et des saints, des aristocraties raffinées, des styles d'art, et l'art de vivre. (Rougier 1947, p. 96)

[Qualitative civilizations propose that beauty, virtue, justice, moral perfection and intellectual contemplation should be our supreme goals. Such civilizations have created consoling religions, highly developed moral systems, exemplary codes and institutions, scientific theories and literary genres; they have produced heroes and saints, refined aristocracies, styles of art and the art of living.]

The ideal solution would be to reconcile quality and quantity, so that the greatest number possible might enjoy the maximum of perfection. But, as noted above, the two notions are mutually antagonistic:

... [L]es catégories de la qualité et de la quantité sont antithétiques, elles se combattent mutuellement; on ne peut exalter l'une sans abaisser l'autre. (Rougier 1947, p. 97)

[The categories of quality and quantity are antithetical, at odds with one another; one can't exalt the one without lowering the other.]

The notion of the quantitative civilization was applied not only to modern American civilization, but – not without some plausibility – also to Nazi Germany, with its obsession with military power and colossal monuments (Rougier 1947, p. 98).

It should be noted that Ferrero's qualitative/quantitative distinction echoes certain strands of German Romantic thought.

In many ways the Romantic movement was a movement of reaction, in particular, reaction against mechanistic ways of thinking and the growing power of atomistic individualism. In Germany, the personal individualism of early Romanticism was transformed into an organic and nationalistic theory of community. The individual was (in the words of G.L. Mosse, cited by Lukes (1973, pp. 20-21)), 'fated to merge with and become rooted in the Volk', only thus being 'able to find his self-expression and his individuality'. But though individuality in the German context was routinely ascribed to supra-personal forces and entities (such as nations), positive notions of personal individuality persisted. According to Georg Simmel, the new German individualism rejected the 18th century notion of atomized and basically undifferentiated individuals for an 'individualism of difference' in which each unique individual was '*called* or destined to realize his own incomparable image'. This new individualism, wrote Simmel, 'might be called qualitative, in contrast to the quantitative individualism of the eighteenth century' (cited in Lukes (1973, p. 18).

Though Rougier, given his empiricism and commitment to scientific values, is probably further from the German Romantic outlook than Ferrero, his work is still marked by its influences. The influence on Rougier's thinking of the German philological tradition with its implicit Aryan ideal, and, more generally of the Romantic school of linguistic thought, has already been noted. His opposition to atomistic individualism is evident in his rejection of laissez-faire liberalism and in the corporatist elements of his social thought.

Another major theme of Ferrero's writings was the problem of defining the nature of legitimate political power. A government derived its legitimacy from its relationship with the governed.

Un gouvernement est légitime lorsqu'il s'exerce conformément à certaines règles acceptées par les gouvernés, respectées par les gouvernants, qui consacrent librement le droit de commander et le devoir d'obéir. Un gouvernement est illégitime lorsqu'il est exercé par la force et subi par la contrainte. (Rougier 1947, p. 100)

[A government is legitimate when it behaves in conformity with certain rules which are accepted by the governed and respected by the rulers, rules which independently sanction the right to command and the duty to obey. A government is illegitimate when it relies on force and is submitted to only through coercion.]

According to Ferrero, an illegitimate government tends to become totalitarian, encroaching on the most private aspects of life.

Fondé par peur, parce qu'il se sent illégitime, il tend à devenir illimité. (Rougier 1947, p. 100)

[Founded on fear, because it senses its own illegitimacy, it aspires to unlimited power.]

The legitimate/illegitimate distinction mirrors the qualitative/quantitative distinction. Legitimate governments are associated with qualitative and illegitimate governments with quantitative civilizations.³

These views of legitimacy, clearly espoused by Rougier in 1947, contrast markedly with some parts of the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a), inspired at least in part by Taine, which seem to imply that a governing elite is quite right to rely on force rather than the consent of the governed. Though it would be a mistake to make too much of this contrast -- given that even in the early work Rougier was keen to defend liberal notions and to warn against the dangers of totalitarianism -- it is evident that a change has occurred, a mellowing.⁴

If this shift in Rougier's thinking was due to Ferrero, it was certainly not as a consequence of his first encounter with Ferrero's works, as the Italian thinker is cited in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*. A closer knowledge of his work and personal friendship may have contributed, but one has the impression in reading Rougier's memoir of two like-minded spirits, two humanists drawing on the same traditions, whose thoughts on moral, social, political and aesthetic matters just happened to converge rather than one influencing the other. Ferrero was older, but, in terms of intellectual status, Rougier was, I think, Ferrero's superior.

Gilles Bounoure (1987) touches on the links between Rougier and Ferrero, and on their respective intellectual itineraries. He claims to identify evidence of fascist sympathies in both thinkers. Though it seems at times as if Bounoure's primary purpose is to demonize Rougier rather than to throw light on the history of social thought, the comments are worth noting.

The references to Ferrero occur in the context of a discussion of Rougier's sources. Rougier's debt to Pareto's meritocratic elitism is mentioned. Bounoure, though he disapproves of Pareto's elitism, characterizing it as cynical, at least recognizes that the Italian economist and social theorist supported certain individual liberties (1987, pp. 152-153). But, claims Bounoure, Rougier drew also on the most extremist critiques of bourgeois liberalism.

Sans parler de W. Sombart, passé du socialisme au fascisme, et dont il reprend certaines théories, c'est à G. Ferrero, sociologue italien ayant suivi une évolution comparable, qu'il demande son programme politique, basé sur une philosophie de l'histoire bien particulière: ce criminaliste de formation, élève, puis gendre du fameux Lombroso, après une période marxisante, avait critiqué le monde moderne, la civilisation quantitative capitaliste, en invitant à restaurer le monde ancien, celui de la civilisation qualitative (*Du monde gréco-latin au monde nouveau*, 1912). En épousant, dès 1914, le parti de la France contre l'Allemagne, il emboîta le pas à Mussolini, avant de réclamer, par réalisme politique, le retour au parlementarisme. Rougier ne le suivit pas. Cette conception de l'histoire est celle-là même que professe aujourd'hui la Nouvelle droite. Avec de telles références, on ne saurait s'étonner de la sympathie manifestée par Rougier, en 1929, pour le fascisme mussolinien: 'la plupart de nos hommes politiques considèrent le fascisme comme une solution de force, un gouvernement personnel qui n'innove que l'arbitraire en matière constitutionnelle: cependant la formule de l' "Etat corporatif" peut être une solution d'avenir, perfectible sans doute (!), mais aussi légitime et viable que la démocratie parlementaire.'

(Bounoure 1987, p. 153)

[Apart from W. Sombart, who passed from socialism to fascism, and from whom Rougier took certain ideas, it was to G. Ferrero, an Italian sociologist whose thought had undergone a comparable evolution, that Rougier turned for his political program. This program was based on a peculiar philosophy of history. Ferrero was a criminologist by training, a pupil, then son-in-law, of the famous Lombroso. After a period during which he was sympathetic to Marxism, Ferrero had taken a critical attitude towards the modern world, represented by quantitative capitalist civilization, recommending a return to the ancient ideal of qualitative civilization (*Du monde gréco-latin au monde nouveau*, 1912). By espousing, from 1914, the cause of France against Germany, he followed Mussolini's line, before, through political realism, calling for a return to parliamentary democracy. Rougier didn't follow him in this. [Ferrero's]

conception of history is identical with that which the New Right professes today. One is not surprised that Rougier, with such a background, showed sympathy in 1929 for Mussolini's fascism: 'Most of our political men consider fascism as a solution based on force, a personality-based system whose only innovation is constitutional despotism. Nonetheless, the notion of the "corporate state" could be a solution of the future, perfectible no doubt (!), but as legitimate and viable as parliamentary democracy.'

Bounoure is not being entirely fair here. For example, he purports to understand the motive (cynical!) for Ferrero's call for a return to parliamentary democracy. More importantly, Rougier's statement, though clearly revealing his reservations concerning parliamentary democracy, is hardly an endorsement of Mussolini or of fascism. Indeed, the quoted remarks carry the clear implication that their author considers force, personality-based politics and constitutional despotism to be undesirable. Bounoure totally ignores Ferrero's and Rougier's unequivocal and consistent rejection of totalitarian systems. In fact, Bounoure exemplifies perfectly the simplistic dichotomous thinking about politics that Rougier attacks in his article on 'La logique de l'alternative' (1948).

Though the extent of Ferrero's influence on Rougier cannot be precisely measured, Rougier's social and political views are close to those of Ferrero, and he certainly made very extensive use of Ferrero's notion of qualitative and quantitative civilizations and associated ideas. In order to assess the extent of Rougier's influence on Ferrero a more extensive study of the Italian thinker would be required, but I think it safe to say that Rougier had more influence on the course of his life than on the evolution of his thought.

Rougier's account of his dealings with Ferrero makes fascinating reading. These few pages of *La France en marbre blanc* reveal a great deal of Rougier's personality, self-image and social and other values, and so warrant, I think, some attention here.

Rougier and Ferrero first met in September 1931. The meeting came about as a result of a letter Rougier wrote to the Italian following the publication a couple of years earlier of a review by Ferrero of one of Rougier's books (Rougier 1947, p. 103). Rougier wrote to Ferrero care of the *Illustration*, which was not the publication which had printed the review but one for which Ferrero wrote on a regular basis. This suggests that Rougier was aware of Ferrero's journalistic work, and also probably an at least occasional reader of his pieces. Rougier proposed a meeting in Paris. Replying, Ferrero suggested rather that Rougier come to spend a week at his home

near Florence. Ferrero also gave Rougier the Paris address of his son Leo, who would explain to Rougier his father's situation.

Léo, à ma profonde stupéfaction, me révéla que depuis sept ans son père vivait en résidence surveillée, entouré de sbires qui chipait ses fruits, lutinaient ses domestiques, et, au reste assez bon garçons, portaient son pardessus et son parapluie lorsqu'il descendait faire des emplettes ou des visites à Florence. (Rougier 1947, p. 103)

[Leo, to my profound surprise, told me that for seven years his father had been under constant surveillance, surrounded by police spies who pilfered his fruit, made themselves familiar with his domestics, and yet, basically decent fellows, carried his overcoat and his umbrella when he went shopping or made visits to Florence.]

Rougier cannot understand why his powerful friends in Europe and America had not been able to free him, or why the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation had not acted on his behalf.

J'avais alors la candeur de croire que les grandes administrations sont faites pour le service du public du public et non pour la quiétude des fonctionnaires. (Rougier 1947, p. 103)

[I was so naive at that time as to believe that international organizations were created for public service rather than for the tranquillity of their officials.]

Rougier's sketch of Ferrero is, no doubt, something of a caricature. As noted above, Ferrero is presented primarily as a symbol of the values which Rougier is promoting.

Grand, sec, nerveux, le visage méditatif et tourmenté, les yeux, derrière son binocle, usés de lecture, et, peut-être, de larmes secrètes, tel m'apparut Ferrero, en m'accueillant à l'Ulivello, dans sa villa compagne, qui eût pu être celle d'Horace ou de Cicéron, tant elle était démunie de tout confort américain, mais dont la vue embrassait le cycle des collines mélodieuses, aux beaux noms sonores, d'où émerge Florence comme une figurine d'art dans une vasque de pierre. (Rougier 1947, p. 103)

[Tall, lean and wiry, with a tormented and meditative face, his eyes, behind his pince-nez, weary from reading and perhaps from secret tears – so Ferrero appeared as he welcomed me to his country villa at Ulivello, a villa which could have belonged to

Horace or Cicero, so devoid was it of all American comforts. However, the view took in a succession of gently rolling hills with sonorous names, from which emerged the city of Florence like a figurine in the stone basin of a fountain.]

Not only the figure himself, but his home and its location are symbolic of moral and aesthetic values. The Spartan furnishings and lack of the accoutrements of decadent modern life combine with the panoramic view, suggestive of the superior perspective of the detached scholar. In fact, later in the memoir, describing his home in the mountains of Switzerland, Rougier is explicit on Ferrero's love for large horizons, both physical and intellectual (1947, p. 106).

Though Rougier did not write on philosophical ethics or aesthetics, ethics and the realm of values was central to his life and, implicitly, to his thought. Alain de Benoist speaks of him as having been in the tradition of the sages of Greece who taught their disciples to forge their characters, as an intellect without character is nothing (Bounoure 1987, p. 145). Rougier's sketch of Ferrero is very much in harmony with this view. Indeed, Ferrero is explicitly praised for melding his thought and his character.

Bien vite, je m'aperçus que l'homme était d'une stature morale incomparable, d'un esprit en perpétuel mouvement et création, qu'il ne vivait que pour penser et conformer sa vie à ses pensées. (Rougier 1947, p. 103)

[Very quickly I understood that [Ferrero's] moral stature was incomparable, that his mind was continually in a state of creative activity, that he existed only to think and to live in conformity with his thoughts.]

The classical and conservative ethic which emerges from these descriptions is completed by Rougier's references to Ferrero's close family life, his devoted wife and children. The Fascist revolution had disrupted what would have been a rich and tranquil existence. Ferrero's son had fled Italy so that he might have the freedom to pursue his writing career, first to France and then to America, where he died in an accident (Rougier 1947, p. 104).

Ferrero himself was denied an exit visa and, refusing to compromise in any way with the regime, became an increasingly isolated figure as, proud and disdainful, he bore unrelenting witness to the classical values of freedom and moderation. So he appeared, at any rate, to his French guest in 1931.

After a stay of seven days, Rougier began the return journey.

Sur le quai de la gare, au moment de prendre le train du retour, je lui dis: "Je vous donne rendez-vous à Paris à la Noël."

[On the station platform, just as I was to board the train home, I said to him: "Let us meet in Paris at Christmas."]

Ferrero responds like a stage Italian (or a Settembrini):

"Ma che!" s'écria Ferrero en levant les bras au ciel, "comment vous y prendrez-vous?" (Rougier 1947, p. 104)

["Ma che!" Ferrero cried out, throwing his arms to heaven, "how will you set about achieving that?"]

But Ferrero is not the only comic character in the drama. Rougier's sense of self-importance (and tendency to indulge in name-dropping) gives an unintentionally comic edge to the self portrait. He continues:

Je n'en avais pas la moindre idée, mais j'avais la certitude de réussir. Revenant par la Suisse, je m'arrêtai à Montreux, et j'allai voir, à la Villa Olga, Romain Rolland, avec qui j'entretenais commerce d'esprit. (Rougier 1947, p. 104)

[I hadn't the least idea, but I was confident I would succeed. Returning via Switzerland, I stopped at Montreux, and I went to see, at the Villa Olga, Romain Rolland, with whom I maintained intellectual contacts.]

Rolland gave Rougier the name of an old friend of Mussolini, Albert Thomas, whom Rougier subsequently approached, and who promised to personally ask Mussolini that an exit visa be granted to Ferrero. At a meeting with Albert Thomas, Mussolini promised that a visa would be provided, adding:

"Au reste, c'est Ferrero qui m'a appris l'histoire romaine." (Rougier 1947, p. 105)

["Besides, it was Ferrero who taught me Roman history."]

And so, thanks to the initiative of Rougier, Ferrero obtained his visa on the morning of December 23. He arrived in Paris at 8 pm on Christmas eve, where he was met at the station by Rougier and an unnamed "spirituelle Parisienne" who was an admirer of Ferrero's work. Rougier's description has Ferrero again taking on Settembrini-like characteristics.

Je n'ai vu de ma vie pareille explosion de joie. Ferrero nous embrassait, riait et pleurait. "Quand le train déboucha du tunnel de Modane en territoire français, je me suis précipité dans les couloirs en criant: "Viva la liberté!" (Rougier 1947, p. 105)

[I have never in my life seen an explosion of joy to equal this. Ferrero kissed us, laughing and crying. "When the train came out of the tunnel of Modane into French territory, I rushed down the corridors, crying out, 'Viva la liberté!']

They then went to midnight mass at Saint-Gervais where, as Rougier put it, the great organ celebrated the nativity of a new life for the exiled Ferrero.

It is significant that Rougier, known in the early 1920s for his celebration of pagan and secular traditions, and of anti-Christian thinkers, should include this reference. It may be that he only went to mass to accommodate Ferrero (and perhaps the female companion), but the fact that he mentions it suggests that he was at this time comfortable with being seen to participate in Catholic ritual. No conclusions may be drawn from this about his religious beliefs, but clearly his conservative respect for traditions now encompasses more than just secular and pagan traditions.

The memoir continues, with Rougier suggesting to Ferrero that he seek a visa for his wife through the Queen of the Belgians, who was a great admirer of his work. This approach bore fruit, and Rougier, on account of the success of his initiatives and stratagems, was compared by Ferrero to the crafty Ulysses.

Ferrero was granted two academic positions in Geneva. His ten years in Switzerland were productive, and would have been happy had it not been for the death of his son, which left him grief-stricken. Ferrero's house in Geneva provided accommodation for many refugees fleeing totalitarian regimes. Rougier visited often.

Venir chez Ferrero, c'était pour nous, Français, qui avions encore l'immense privilège d'être libres, nous replonger aux sources vives d'une Europe cosmopolite, libérale, érudite et savante, assise sur d'antiques disciplines de probité intellectuelle et morale, de travail, de traditions familiales; c'était retrouver la saveur de vivre, en respirant l'arome d'une civilisation de qualité. Ferrero demeurait citoyen de cette "Italie aimée des dieux" et membre de cette "République universelle des esprits" qui en faisait un des derniers "bons Européens". (Rougier 1947, p. 106)

[To come to Ferrero's home was for us Frenchmen, who still had the immense privilege of being free, to be immersed in the living springs of a cosmopolitan, liberal, cultivated and learned Europe which was founded on the classical disciplines of intellectual and moral probity, of hard work and familial traditions; it was to find again the savour of life, breathing the aroma of a civilization of quality. Ferrero remained a citizen of that 'Italy beloved of the gods' and a member of that 'universal republic of minds' which made him one of the last of the 'good Europeans'.]

This passage touches on themes which are central both to Rougier's political outlook and to broader aspects of his thought. Again he reiterates the need to base culture and intellectual attainment on traditional moral values. Patriotism is interpreted in the light of larger ideas – a Europe based on its classical heritage, and a universal republic of minds. This latter notion reflects the ambiguous element of rationalism in Rougier's thought, which was discussed, for example, in relation to his attitude to scholasticism.

Ferrero, like Rougier, is little discussed today. Like Rougier, he is difficult to classify. His analyses may be rejected as arbitrary and worthless as academic history or social analysis, but his concerns, like Rougier's in his social and political writings, were not primarily academic. He represented and defended certain ideals, the ideals indeed of classical humanism, and, as is clear from Rougier's memoir, he stood up for these liberal values at a time when it was very dangerous to do so. He may not have been a genius or an heroic figure, but he seems to have been a good and gifted and worthy man, a product of a Europe which Rougier was regretting in 1947 and which is now long gone. And Rougier's admiring portrait of Ferrero tells us much, I think, about Rougier's own deepest beliefs and attitudes.

Romain Rolland [1866-1944] was also very much a product of that old, now-vanished Europe to which Rougier was so passionately attached. An eminent novelist and intellectual (he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1915), it seems that he knew Ferrero in his heyday, and he

speaks of him with respect. As noted above, Rolland helped Rougier in his attempts to provide Ferrero with an exit visa from Italy. On his return journey from visiting Ferrero in Italy, Rougier had stopped to visit Rolland at his villa at Villeneuve. According to Rougier's account, he and Rolland chatted amicably about other matters before the visitor raised the issue of Ferrero's predicament. But how close were the two men in fact?

There is reason to believe that the intellectual dispositions and ideological views of Rougier and Rolland were quite different. Rolland was of the generation (previous to Rougier's) whose early intellectual environment was dominated by skeptical and worldly writers such as Taine. Rolland reacted against these influences, however. Whilst early rejecting his mother's Catholicism, he retained throughout his life a passionately mystical outlook, strongly marked by egalitarian and Christian values (Rolland 1970, pp. 21 ff.). In *Le voyage intérieur* he explicitly criticizes Taine for lacking a religious sense, and so failing truly to understand it (Rolland 1959, p. 199). Would he, then, be likely to see eye to eye with a man who had dedicated his major work to Taine's memory?

Rolland's left-wing, pacifist and Christian sympathies certainly do contrast with Rougier's right-wing Hellenism, but, as we will see, the differences are not as clearcut as they initially appear, and, further, they would appear to have become less pronounced over time. For Rougier gradually moved away from his earlier hostile attitude to Christian values (such as compassion) and even made some conciliatory remarks about the spirit of communism (see Chapter 10). It is possible that the influence of Rolland, who was very sympathetic to the Russian experiment, lay behind these general changes in Rougier's thinking, and specifically behind Rougier's comments on communism, which do, given Rougier's political convictions and accustomed forthrightness, seem to call for some such explanation. But even in the mid-1920s – before the changes in Rougier's thought became evident – Rolland and Rougier shared many intellectual and cultural preoccupations and concerns.

A letter from Rolland to Rougier, written in November 1924 and printed in a selection of Rolland's letters (1967, pp. 212 ff.), gives an interesting insight into how Rougier was perceived at this time by an eminent and intelligent observer. In the letter, Rolland distances himself from Rougier's 'idéologie culturelle' (1967, p. 212). Rolland sees Rougier as being like a Roman sensing the end of the empire who seeks to save it. It was about this time that Rougier published his work on Celsus in which he praises Celsus's activism in the cause of the pagan empire. For Rougier, France embodied the values of the classical world, but Rolland refuses to see France as a Roman or as a Mediterranean nation, the inheritor *par excellence* of Greco-

Roman civilization. On the contrary, he sees France in terms of a plurality of traditions and peoples.

...[P]ar la France j'entends – ce qu'elle est réellement – une harmonie de races différentes, dont le latin n'est qu'une note dans la polyphonie. (Rolland 1967, p. 212)

[I see France as what it is in reality – a harmony of different peoples in which the Latin race is but one note in the polyphonic whole.]

Rougier combined a curious patriotism with his proposals for international governance, whereas Rolland's mystical tendencies led him to a more thoroughgoing universalism. Rolland goes so far as to say that, if Europe renounces the attempt to create a harmony of different races, he will renounce Europe. Despite his profound European roots and cultural attachments, Rolland always sought to extend his sympathies. His associations with non-European literary and political figures – notably Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi – are well known.

Rolland admits that his instincts are quite as elitist as Rougier's, but that his reason leads him in other directions.

Aristocrate d'instinct, et pessimiste de tempérament, je ne saurais approuver votre aristocratie historique et votre pessimisme philosophique. Je ne saurais universaliser les tendances de mon instinct et de mon tempérament. Ma raison m'a été donnée pour réagir contre mes préférences passionnées, – qui sont, le plus souvent, des manques ou des maladies. (Rolland 1967, pp. 212-213)

[Aristocrat by instinct and pessimist by temperament, do not expect me to endorse your historical aristocracy and your philosophical pessimism. Do not expect me to universalize my instinctual and temperamental tendencies. I was granted reason so that I might react against my passionate preferences which are, more often than not, deficiencies or maladies.]

Rolland suggests that Rougier's elitism is self-serving and does not take into account alternative perspectives – 'c'est ici... "l'orfèvre" qui parle', he writes.⁵ Rolland himself – just because he is a part of the elite – refuses to grant it an exclusive supremacy. It is false, then, to say, as Rougier was suggesting, that life is not worth living if our (elitist) values are not

realized: it may be so *for us*, but we are not the whole of humanity. Rolland recognizes that others will have their own perspectives on what is and what is not worthwhile.

As Rolland's argument progresses, points of similarity with Rougier's outlook become increasingly evident – as does a key point of difference. For the older man's analysis of the predicament of civilization is in fact very close to Rougier's; he differs not so much in his judgement of, but in his response to, the levelling, democratic tendencies of the age. He has a very ambivalent attitude towards these tendencies, and he struggles to come to terms with them.

Je suis conscient, comme vous, du duel tragique qui s'engage entre les élites et la démocratie niveleuse. Plus pessimiste encore que vous, peut-être, j'y vois bien plus qu'un duel, – une terrible loi de la nature, qui achemine les sociétés humaines au stade de la fourmilière. Et je vous assure que peu de visions me causent autant d'horreur que celle de la fourmilière... (Rolland 1967, p. 213)

[I am aware, as you are, of the tragic duel which is taking place between the elites and a democracy which is committed to obliterate all social stratification. More pessimistic even than you, perhaps, I see in this process much more than a duel – I see a terrible law of nature which drives human societies to the level of the ant-hill. And I assure you that few visions cause me as much horror as that of the ant-hill...]

Rolland is prepared to join Rougier in fighting against these levelling forces – but only on condition that their human adversaries be respected and seen as brothers.

Car, au fond, notre sort dépend du leur. (Rolland 1967, p. 213)

[Because, ultimately, our lot depends on theirs.]

Rolland sees a growing and dangerous divide between the elite and the masses. He refers, in particular, to the aestheticism of the post-war elite in France, and is implicitly characterizing Rougier as being a part of this caste.

The central concern of Rolland's work is to exalt an ideal of energy without violence, and this ideal is reflected in the letter to Rougier. Rolland's non-violence is seen in his advocacy of conciliation, and in his description of himself as an intermediary. But he also refers to the need to reawaken (spiritual?) energies, something Rougier also is attempting.

J'aime que vous soyez un des sonneurs de ce réveil. (Rolland 1967, p. 214)

[I would be delighted if you were one of the sounders of the bell of awakening.]

Rolland's ideal of compassion, brotherhood and non-violence seems to combine elements of the Christian heritage with elements of Vedantic thought. Certainly, his debt to the Christian tradition is undisguised. In fact, Rolland seems to have followed a trajectory similar to that of Franz Cumont, reverting to (an admittedly heterodox) Catholicism in old age. His social and familial world, like that of Rougier's, was largely a Catholic world, and, even if both thinkers refrained from acceding to Catholic and Christian dogmas, that world determined many of their intellectual preoccupations.

According to R.A. Francis (1999, p. 46), Rolland came to feel the need for a more personal religion late in life, and came to look with favour on the more personal elements of Catholicism, including the cult of the Virgin Mary. Nonetheless, insists Francis, 'Rolland's final position is not Christian orthodoxy, but a tragic vision...' (1999, p. 246). Certainly, for most of his life Rolland was more pantheist than Christian, and he always retained a critical distance from orthodoxy. He sanctioned a Roman Catholic burial, but only to appease family members.

Rolland's critical stance in relation to Christianity may also be seen in his concern that the figure of Christ seems to disparage work (Francis 1999, p. 245). Like Rougier, he was a prolific writer, and believed strongly in the virtues of hard work and self-discipline.

Though the aging Rolland certainly drifted closer to the religion of his childhood than Rougier and maintained some very different ideological commitments, the shared preoccupations of the two men flowed naturally from a shared intellectual tradition. Renan, for example, was important for both of them.

As a student, Rolland had actually visited Renan, then an ailing and very celebrated man. They spoke for an hour and Rolland produced a fond and respectful account of the old philosopher, who spoke to him of the vanity of life and yet of its excellence.⁶ 'La vie est bonne: c'est l'oeuvre d'un démiurge bienfaisant,' Renan told Rolland by way of encouragement (Rolland 1961, pp. 175-176).

A notion that made a deep impression on Rolland was Renan's vision of 'la route en lacets' – the zig-zag path up the mountain (Rolland 1961, p. 174). The way often seemed lost, but it was not. This metaphor – like the image of the tapestry worker who sees only the reverse of the tapestry – expresses Renan's optimism concerning the goodness and ultimate meaningfulness of life and of history, and his belief in progress.

Another major influence on Rolland was Charles Péguy [1873-1914] who was – like Renan – indebted to German Romantic philosophy and representative of progressive elements within Catholicism. Péguy was a socialist, a modernist Catholic, and sometime friend of Sorel. It was from Péguy that Rolland took the view that God and liberty are consubstantial (Rolland 1970, p. 310).

But while Rolland's debt to Péguy is clear, the question of Péguy's direct influence on Rougier is problematical. Though the preeminent position which Rougier accords to freedom and human choice may well reflect a debt to Péguy and his circle, there are precious few references to Péguy in Rougier's writings. One does discern, however, common themes which may be explicable in terms of both thinkers having drawn on the same traditions. I suggested above that Rougier's curious brand of spiritualized and internationalized nationalism may owe something to Renan's notion of the nation as a spiritual principal. Péguy's mystical patriotism seems to belong to the same family of ideas.

Rolland's emphasis on the importance of the will is directly associated with his conservative aesthetic, another area of commonality between Rolland and Rougier, and one which has some relevance to their respective social philosophies.

Le voyage intérieur, a selection⁷ of introspective and rhapsodic pieces, full of classical and religious imagery and mixing references to art, religion and politics, expresses Rolland's commitment to the notion of selfhood based on the creative will. 'Je crée, donc je suis,' he wrote (Rolland 1959, p. 109). But, as is clear from the many allusions to classical art and literature, Rolland's notion of creativity shares little with the mentality associated with modern art, music and literature. This mentality indicates, in the words of Francis (1999, p. 205), 'the collapse of traditional notions of selfhood based on the will', notions which Rolland cherishes. Aesthetically, Rolland looks to the past, to the French classical tradition: he values above all 'l'esprit lucide et le regard vif' (Rolland 1959, p. 11).

In *Le voyage intérieur*, Rolland expresses a commitment to preserve the rare treasures of European civilization. It is particularly notable – given that his allegiances were to the arts rather than the sciences – that Rolland shared Rougier’s view that the greatest treasure of European civilization was the spirit of scientific investigation. Of course, Renan was committed to this view. But Rolland, like Rougier, not only draws on Renan, but also on the new scientific tradition exemplified by such thinkers as Einstein, Planck, William James and Henri Poincaré.⁸

Rolland’s social philosophy, mixing conservative and progressive elements, may thus be seen to draw on the very traditions – cultural, scientific, ideological and religious – that form the basis of Rougier’s thought.

¹ Ilse B. Jonas (1979) has explored the origins of the character of Settembrini. On more than one occasion, Mann was asked about possible models for Settembrini, but he did not give a precise answer to the question, saying on one occasion that he had forgotten (Jonas 1979, pp. 50-51), and on another that the characters of Naphta and Settembrini were ‘as good as freely invented’, but that ‘faintly suggestive models’ had crossed his path (Jonas 1979, p. 53). There are many parallels between Ferrero and Settembrini: though their political views are not identical, both are outspoken proponents of “freedom”; both have a distinctly international perspective, and are active members of an international cultural organization (Settembrini is a proud member of the International League for the Organization of Progress (Mann 1960, p. 244), while Ferrero was associated with the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (Rougier 1947, p. 103)); both are given to extravagant gestures and extravagant rhetoric... The list could easily be extended.

² These elements may be seen to have been transmuted into radical elements as Ferrero’s ideas have passed, through Rougier, to the French New Right.

³ This idea of Ferrero’s may be seen to lead (via Rougier) to the notion of “soft totalitarianism” which the European New Right applies to American culture.

⁴ The same may be said of Ferrero. He was a radical in his youth and a friend of Sorel. Daniel Gasman (1998, p. 312) quotes from Sorel’s 1898 introduction to Saverino Merlino’s *Formes et essences du socialisme*, a work which tries to reconcile Darwin, Spencer and Marx: ‘My friend, G. Ferrero, who is indeed one of the most distinguished spirits of the new generation of Italians, noted the great importance of the book of M. Merlino and the revolution he wishes to incur among the ideas of the socialists.’

⁵ Literally, ‘The goldsmith is speaking here.’ This figurative idiom means, in effect, that the proffered advice is not disinterested.

⁶ Rolland wrote of the meeting in *Compagnons de route* (1961, pp. 169-178 and 246-248).

⁷ Most of the pieces were written in the 1920s; the collection was first published during World War II.

⁸ He cites Einstein in *Le voyage intérieur* (1959, p. 11). See also Francis (1999, p. 248).

Chapter 10

Developments in Rougier's social thought

It will have become evident that the subtle shifts in Rougier's attitude to aspects of Christianity are paralleled by changes in his social thought. Essentially, his social writings begin, from the mid-1920s, and more decisively from the 1930s – a period more or less coinciding with his association with Ferrero and Rolland – to be marked by a more accommodating attitude towards the Christian inheritance and a move towards mainstream liberalism. As previously noted, allusions to Taine and Nietzsche are rare in his later works, though Renan is still much cited. His 1920 work may be contrasted with, for example, his 1935 book *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines*, the essay 'L'Occident est-il chrétien?' published in his *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la civilisation antique* (1974), or his last book, *Du paradis à l'utopie* (1979).

Even a half-sympathetic reading of the works of Rougier's maturity reveals, I think, an increasing sympathy for aspects of the Christian inheritance of the West, increasing concern for human rights, a more compassionate outlook, and a more respectful attitude to democratic ideals. Bounoure's hostile view of Rougier as a right-wing extremist (discussed briefly in the previous chapter) is sustainable only if these tendencies are interpreted as cynical rhetorical ploys. And so they may be. But Bounoure's tendency to claim to discern the motives – usually cynical – of the figures he discusses does not inspire confidence.¹

In *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines* (1935a), Rougier is more positive about democracy than he was in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a). In the section on democracy in the 1935 book, he sets out to describe, objectively, and even sympathetically, what he calls the democratic mystique. Rather than attacking, as he did in the earlier work, the two chief principles of the Revolution (the dogma of equality and the principle of the sovereignty of the people), he merely lists the guiding principles of democratic governments (1935a, p. 45). The first two principles are familiar. The first is the principle of popular sovereignty; the second is the principle of civil and political equality. So the dogma has, slightly modified, become a principle. Added to these two is the principle of the limitation of public power through a respect for individual and civil rights. The individual is to be treated as an end and not as a means (Rougier 1935a, p.46).

Rougier sees the notion of not treating people solely as means as being closely connected with the notion of popular sovereignty: governments exist to serve the governed and not the other way about (1935a, p. 46).

The Kantian and democratic flavor of this text indicates a clear development in Rougier's thinking. Rougier seems now to be taking more seriously – and applying more universally – the notion of the dignity of the individual, and the ultimately Christian philosophy which underlies it.

Steven Lukes has given a concise and plausible analysis of the notion of the dignity of the individual, tracing its origins to the Judeo-Christian tradition and to Christianity in particular (Lukes 1973, p. 45). Lukes emphasizes the centrality of this notion to Rousseau and Kant (1973, p. 49). But it is his comments on McTaggart which are perhaps most interesting in the current context. McTaggart, a philosophical idealist, speaks of the importance of the individual in terms very close to Rougier's own. In 1934 McTaggart wrote: 'the individual is an end, the society only a means'. As for the attribution of ultimate value to the latter, it is 'fetish-worship': it 'would be as reasonable to worship a sewage pipe' (cited Lukes 1973, p. 50).

One can only agree with Lukes' summing up:

In general, this idea of the dignity of the individual has the logical status of a moral (or religious) axiom. (Lukes 1973, p. 51)

Drawing as he does on this notion in elaborating his political philosophy, Rougier is committing himself to a concept which, as he was well aware, had its origins in a religious tradition. As he was fond of highlighting the paradoxes of history, that good can come from bad, truth from error, he may well have believed that the concept could continue to be meaningful even when severed from the religious and historical matrix within which it arose. But, whatever his view on this matter, two things are clear: his own social thinking is always sensitive to historical origins and cultural context; and the writings of his middle and later periods especially are marked at times by apparent Christian sympathies.

Of course, from the idea of the dignity of the individual flows the notion of human rights. Rougier (1935a, p. 46) readily admits the Christian origin of this notion, and, labeling all anti-democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian ideologies as being, of necessity, anti-Christian, he appears to align himself with the Christian tradition.

Sacrifiant délibérément l'individu à l'Etat, lui déniait toute autonomie, le traitant comme un simple instrument de la puissance publique, elles tombent dans une statolâtrie qui est une reviviscence du paganisme antique. (Rougier 1935a, p. 46)

[Deliberately sacrificing the individual to the State, denying him all autonomy, treating him as a simple instrument of the public authority, they fall into a form of state-worship which is a revival of classical paganism.]

One could be forgiven for thinking that the always anti-totalitarian Rougier had become an unequivocally Christian and democratic thinker, so closely does he align anti-totalitarianism, Christianity and democracy.² Subsequent sections of his analysis make it clear, however, that Rougier retains some reservations about democracy, and that this is an analysis of a mystique (or ideology) with which the author is not entirely comfortable.

The crisis of democracy in the post-Great War period, he notes, was only partly the result of external factors: internal causes were also to blame (Rougier 1935a, p. 51). Rougier here picks up a theme which he had raised previously (notably in Rougier (1920a); see also Rougier (1927, p. 347)) – albeit that in the earlier writings he was somewhat less sympathetic to the object of his analysis, the flawed democratic mystique. Democratic governments carry within themselves germs of weakness which cannot help but develop over time. This fundamental weakness is related to the atomistic individualism espoused by modern democracies; so that, as far as the democratic structures and processes are concerned, only individuals exist; whereas, in fact, modern societies are comprised of various professional syndicates and a multitude of commercial, technical and intellectual groupings. The French revolutionaries saw such groupings as distorting the general will, and sought to do away with them. Rougier defends a model of democracy involving a double representation (for individuals and for collective interests), a key role for professional and intellectual experts, and a strong executive (1935a, p. 52). As things stand, economic factors work in parallel with political factors to undermine democracy from within. Capitalism, which formerly was a force for democracy, has led to unhealthy concentrations of wealth. This plutocratic tendency of contemporary democracies has understandably caused many intellectuals concerned for social justice and probity to support the parties of the left, including the revolutionary left (Rougier 1935a, p. 53).

Even Rougier, with his right wing tendencies, sees the Soviet Russian regime in a less harsh light than the regimes of Germany and Italy. For the Soviet regime, having rejected the

Trotskyian notion of world revolution, is now, he thinks, no threat to world peace (Rougier 1935a, p: 116). Of the three totalitarian systems, he rightly predicts that the Soviet system will last the longest, though his reason for so believing may appear naive: it will last, he thinks, because the idealism of its mystique corresponds to deep-seated aspirations of the human heart (Rougier 1935a, p. 75).

Rougier's work on contemporary political mystiques ends with an unequivocal rejection of the totalitarian state, be it of the left or the right, and an unequivocal defense of liberalism. The sovereignty of the state is to be limited from below and from above: from below, by a respect for the rights of individuals, and, from above, by a respect for the rights of other nations (Rougier 1935a, p. 114). The League of Nations would act as the coordinating organ of the interdependence of peoples (Rougier 1935a, p. 115). Rougier's notion of the nation state is a pragmatic and merely political and administrative entity, with more or less permeable borders. And, in a passage which prefigures Churchill's nightmare vision of a Europe divided by an iron curtain, he attacks totalitarian leaders for erecting between peoples barriers more perilous than mere territorial and customs barriers – spiritual barriers which prevent the free flow of ideas and mutual understanding (Rougier 1935a, p. 115).

It is interesting to compare these ideas with notions Rougier outlined almost a half-century later, in his last book. The continuity is striking. However, in 1979, Rougier's internationalism is stronger, and his commitment to the nation state even more tenuous, than it was in 1935. The problems of mankind are such that, if they are to be effectively addressed, they must be seen in supranational and global terms.

The political inheritance of the past, which has divided the earth into 150 sovereign states, so different in terms of size and stage of development, must, he argues, be transcended if the broader political, technical and ethical problems facing us are to be solved. He notes that over and above the patchwork ('marqueterie') of the U.N., a network of institutions and transnational enterprises is beginning to form the outline of a global order (Rougier 1979a, p. 268). However, the grand international congresses held under the auspices of the U.N. and similar bodies have failed to solve major problems, largely because of conflict between the broad, long-term views of scientists and other experts and the short-term thinking of national governments. Supra-national bodies with real power must gradually supplant national governments.

Au monde fragmenté d'aujourd'hui qui se dérobe aux abdications de souveraineté, il faut substituer progressivement une série d'instances supranationales douées, par consensus véritable, d'un pouvoir reconnu de décision et d'exécution. (Rougier 1979a, p. 268)

[It is necessary progressively to replace the fragmented world of today, which shirks dealing with abdications of sovereignty, with a series of supranational structures, endowed – through a true consensus – with recognized legislative and executive powers.]

Given the scale of many of the problems of the late 20th century, viable solutions were dependent on a recognition of the interdependence of peoples and long-term thinking and planning.

These ideas exhibit continuity not only with his mid-1930s liberalism, but also with his early social and political ideas. In his passionate defense of elitism in the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, Rougier had insisted on long-term thinking as being the mark of a ruling elite. The need for such a perspective, and the failure of politicians and the mass of the people to achieve it, is a constant theme of his social and political writings.

Some of the essays collected in *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la civilisation antique* (1974) further elucidate Rougier's mature view of the Christian inheritance and its relevance to his social thought. Bounoure (1986, p. 164) dismisses the book as a collection of pre-war articles, but at least two of them, including the essay 'L'Occident est-il chrétien?', were written after World War II.

Referring as it does to Camus' 'homme révolté', to other mid-century authors and to a conference held in November 1955, 'L'Occident est-il chrétien?' is clearly an example of Rougier's later work. It nonetheless reflects a strong continuity with the works of his middle period. Like *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines* (1935a) and other works of the 1930s and 1940s, it gives a warmer and more positive interpretation of the contribution of the Christian tradition to Western civilisation than did his early writings. It exhibits a sense of compassion and sympathy which is lacking in his earliest work. Rougier quotes Renan on the necessity of religious illusions (1974, p. 155); significantly, there is no appeal to Taine or Nietzsche.

This essay highlights a number of positive features of the Christian inheritance, without which the West would not be what it is. For example, the Christian tradition challenged and undermined the classical view that manual work was ignoble. This view had in fact hindered the development of science in the classical world. Modern experimental science is of course crucially dependent on the construction of complex instrumentation, measuring devices and so on, as well as practical applications (Rougier 1974, p. 142). Rougier (1974, p. 143) speaks of a moral and social revolution, brought about largely by Christianity, which rehabilitated manual work and the mechanical arts and so led ultimately to modern science.

He notes, however, that science and technology does not of itself constitute a social philosophy: choices need to be made regarding the purposes technology must serve (Rougier 1974, p. 151). Furthermore, modern science and technology pose a totalitarian threat unknown to earlier ages. The power of technology, if monopolised by the state, can be used to create radically dehumanised societies such as have been envisaged by writers such as Gheorghui, Orwell and Aldous Huxley. The Western notion of individual rights may serve to counter this threat. So, returning to the themes of *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines*, Rougier rejects absolutist or idealist social philosophies, insisting that the power that knowledge confers must be used to the benefit of the only conscious, living, concrete realities – that is, human individuals. Governments are made to serve people, not to exploit them (Rougier 1974, pp. 151-152). One must submit public power to the unceasing control of the governed, which implies ‘gouvernements électifs et responsables devant leurs mandataires’ (Rougier 1974, p. 152). Though this view seems diametrically opposed to previously stated views – notably Rougier (1920a, pp. 51-52) – his mature views are not incompatible with forms of elitism, and can be seen to have developed as a response to certain trends in 20th century life. Rougier’s defense of the individual in the face of these new forces is in fact very much in the spirit of Nietzsche who saw that the newer forms of despotism posed a greater threat to the individual than traditional forms.³

Nonetheless, there is much in ‘L’Occident est-il chrétien?’ which is very unNietzschean, and the essay confirms that Rougier’s sympathy for some Christian ideas which is particularly evident in his works on social themes from the 1930s and 1940s continued well into the post-war era.

Bounoure interprets Rougier’s appeals to natural law and universal human rights in various post-World War II political works as cynical opportunism:

Le recours aux principes du droit naturel et aux lois démocratiques, rejetés comme sans fondement rationnel en 1929, est un bon exemple des procédés qu'utilisa Rougier dans ces écrits-là. (1986, p. 160)

[Resorting to the principles of natural law and to democratic laws -- rejected as being without rational foundation in 1929 -- is a good example of the strategems Rougier used in those writings.]

Rougier had indeed attacked notions of natural law and universal human rights in his earlier writings, including *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a), where he takes a fairly dismissive approach, but Bounoure misinterprets the change, which represents, I think, not just a cynical debating tactic but a genuine shift in Rougier's thinking towards a more mainstream liberalism, prompted not only by the threat of new forms of despotism, but also by a more positive view of the values implicit in the Christian tradition.

In the light of his shifting sympathies, Rougier's post-World War II appeals to natural law and rights should come as no surprise. Bounoure has just not understood the trajectory of Rougier's thought.

In 'L'Occident est-il chrétien?', Rougier not only presents the notion of rights, based on an unconditional respect for the human person, as an important bulwark against despotic governments, he goes so far as to incorporate positive (or benefit) rights into his list of essential principles.

[Les droits de l'homme] affirment la liberté individuelle, la liberté de conscience, de pensée et d'expression, le règne de la loi substituée à l'arbitraire des princes, la gestion démocratique des sociétés fondée sur le libre consentement des intéressés, la sécurité et l'assistance sociale qui seules peuvent affranchir l'homme de ses deux plus mauvaises conseillères, le misère et la peur. (Rougier 1974, p. 152)

[The rights of man affirm individual liberty, liberty of conscience, thought and expression, the rule of law replacing the arbitrary rule of princes, the democratic management of societies founded on the free consent of interested parties, and social security and assistance which alone are able to free man from the most dreaded evils of poverty and fear.]

Rougier traces the roots of the idea of human rights to a range of sources, including Greek sages, Roman jurists, Renaissance humanists, natural law theorists, enlightenment philosophers, and liberals and socialists of the 19th century (Rougier 1974, p. 152).

Nor does he fail to identify a significant Christian element in these notions, as Christianity tended both to value the individual and to undermine excessive respect for the state (1974, p. 153). Most surprising in all this are the favourable reference to social assistance ('... la sécurité et l'assistance sociale qui seules peuvent affranchir l'homme...'), and the subsequent discussion of the Christian notion of charity which lies behind the democratic conception of society.

Rougier recognises that, though classical thinkers such as Cicero and Pliny the Elder had spoken of charity, these noble lessons, as he puts it, were addressed to an elite (1974, p. 152). Primitive Christianity popularised the notion and added a warmth of heart lacking in the sages of Greece and Rome. Rougier's implicit recognition of the value of 'chaleur de coeur' is in marked contrast to the harshness of some of his earlier writings, and would come as something of a shock to someone who had read only Rougier's early writings, or Bounoure's tendentious portrait of Rougier as cynical extremist and anti-Semite. Indeed Rougier's description of the effects of the Christian notion of charity reads like a celebration of this aspect of the Christian inheritance. His rhetoric here serves the cause of democracy and compassion, whereas in some previously-cited early passages it celebrated the exercise of power by a cold if not callous elite.

[Le christianisme] sut prodiguer aux plus misérables une espérance, aux plus méprisés une dignité, aux plus coupables un pardon. Il n'écarta pas du porche de ses Eglises les criminels repentis à la différence de certains mystères antiques comme les Mystères d'Eleusis. Il secourut la veuve et l'orphelin, assista le vieillard et l'infirme. Depuis l'établissement de l'Eglise en Gaule, c'est elle qui assuma presque toutes les charges de l'assistance publique jusqu'à la Révolution française. En dehors des monastères qui faisait presque tous fonction d'hospices, chaque ville eut son Hôtel-Dieu, et, aujourd'hui encore, la moitié des hôpitaux d'Europe sont des fondations médiévales. Le christianisme n'a pas fondé la démocratie; mais, par son souci des pauvres et des humbles, elle a mis l'accent sur les problèmes sociaux. (Rougier 1974, p. 153)

[Christianity was able to give hope to the most wretched, dignity to the most despised, forgiveness to the most guilty. It did not bar from the porches of its churches repentant criminals, in contrast to certain mystery religions of the ancient world, like the Eleusinian mysteries. It gave succour to the widow and the orphan, and assisted the old

and the infirm. Since its establishment in Gaul, the Church shouldered almost all of the burdens of public assistance until the French Revolution. Apart from the monasteries, almost all of which served as hospices, each town had its Hôtel-Dieu, and, still today, a half of the hospitals of Europe are medieval foundations. Christianity did not found democracy, but through its care for the poor and the deprived, it turned society's focus towards social problems.]

Though he shows a more humane face in this piece, Rougier has not entirely succumbed to the Christian outlook. He continues to speak, drawing on Renan, of religion as a useful and necessary illusion, though not quite in the manner of a Charles Maurras.

Renan a exprimé merveilleusement cela dans ses drames philosophiques: Caliban avait besoin de la musique d'Ariel pour enchanter sa peine, avant que Prospero, par sa science, ait pu la soulager. (Rougier 1974, p. 156)

[Renan has expressed this marvellously in his philosophical dramas: Caliban had need of the music of Ariel to charm away his pain, so that Prospero, by his science, might be able to relieve it.]

Maurras exploited the institutions of the Church for political purposes, while personally rejecting religion. Rougier, on the other hand, disparages the institutional structures of the Church while defending a form of personal religion. He distinguished between the Church and the faithful, most of whom cultivated a personal and non-dogmatic religion – 'moins l'adhésion à un crédo qu'une poétique' (Rougier 1974, p. 155).

For Rougier, then, the Catholic tradition is really two traditions, which may explain its contradictory effects. Rougier's rhetoric and use of connotative meaning ('enchaînée'⁴, 'dogmes', 'rigidité' *versus* 'vécue librement', etc.) again reveals his position as clearly as a direct statement of belief:

... l'Eglise, enchaînée à la lettre de ses dogmes, à la rigidité de sa discipline, au souci de ses intérêts temporels, et, d'autre part, la religion telle qu'elle est vécue librement dans l'âme des fidèles... (Rougier 1974, p. 155)

[[On the one hand] the Church, bound to the letter of its dogmas, to the rigidity of its rules, to concerns about its temporal interests, and, on the other, religion, such as it is freely lived in the souls of the faithful...]

Rougier never endorses, however, a purely spiritual ideal. He returns at the end of the essay, and the book, to pagan themes, to an appeal to the myths of Prometheus and Faust, and to a focus on the temporal world. His main point echoes Feuerbach and Marx, and indeed Rougier speaks of religion as the opium of the people (1974, p. 156), but as a drug which played a good and necessary part in human progress, the source of a fruitful dream. Turning Pascal on his head, Rougier sees Western man betting not on an afterlife, but on a better future for life on earth.

Avec le christianisme, l'homme a rêvé d'une cité de justes vraiment fraternelle et heureuse; mais, désespérant de ce monde qui passe, il l'a projetée dans l'au-delà. L'homme occidental, l'homme prométhéen, l'homme faustien a tenu le pari de tenter de la réaliser ici-bas, en n'acceptant aucune fatalité naturelle du moment qu'elle est évitable, aucune injustice du moment qu'elle est redressable, aucun *Ignorabimus* du moment que les problèmes posés ont un sens. Et c'est en cela que réside proprement le génie de l'Occident. (Rougier 1974, pp. 156-157)

[With Christianity, man dreamed of a city of the just, truly fraternal and happy; but, despairing of this temporal world, he projected it into the beyond. Western man, Promethean man, Faustian man took the wager to try to realize this ideal here below, accepting no natural calamity from the moment it becomes avoidable, no injustice from the moment it is redressable, no *ignorabimus* from the moment that the problems are meaningfully posed. And it is here the genius of the West truly resides.]

Rougier has clearly moved away from the more Nietzschean position of his early writings. The Christian ideal ('... une cité de justes vraiment fraternelle et heureuse...') is not rejected but merely turned into a social and political (rather than a purely spiritual) ideal. Whatever traces of Nietzschean influence remain, Rougier has come more wholeheartedly to accept at least some aspects of the Judeo-Christian transvaluation of values.⁵

The writings of his middle and later periods indicate, then, a shift in Rougier's thinking which see him occupying what looks like a mainstream liberal position. This does not represent a dramatic change from his earlier views, but rather an evolution, a development of the liberal

elements of his earlier writings, coupled with increasing sympathy for humanistic and Christian values. In the next chapter, his role in the development of a European neo-liberal tradition and his links with other thinkers associated with this tradition will be explored.

¹ Recall that he called Pareto's elitism cynical, and said that Ferrero moved away from supporting Mussolini out of 'political realism'. Rougier is painted essentially as a devious manipulator and rhetorician. See further discussion below, and in Chapter 12.

² The contrast with his sympathetic views of the pagan Roman state outlined in *Celse contre les chrétiens* is stark. Clearly, at this stage of his development, Rougier is aligning himself more closely than he did previously – and indeed more closely than he did, apparently, in later years – with Christian culture. If these fluctuations appear puzzling, it must be remembered that Rougier makes some positive comments on Christianity even in *Celse*. In other words, he could be seen to have been consistently sympathetic to some aspects of the Christian heritage (and consistently opposed to Christian dogmas).

³ As noted above, Rougier had cited Nietzsche on this matter in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, p. 497).

⁴ The image of religion as a chain recalls Renan's imagery in 'La prière sur l'Acropole'. See Chadbourne (1968, p. 143).

⁵ Even in his earlier work, Rougier's position was not entirely Nietzschean. It may be seen to have more in common with that of Paul Rée and the "English empiricists" who took a more optimistic and utilitarian line than Nietzsche.

Chapter 11

Rougier and European neo-liberalism

Rougier certainly saw himself as a liberal, and he has been so characterized by others. The French economist, Maurice Allais, calls him one of the founders of modern liberalism (Allais 1990, p. 17); Jacques Rueff, also, was convinced of his liberal credentials, calling him 'probablement le plus libéral de nos philosophes' (Allais 1990, p. 36).

In fact, Rougier was a member of an identifiable group of liberal theorists. His association with a range of thinkers, notably Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Wilhelm Röpke and Walter Lippmann mark him as belonging to a movement that has become known as (European) neo-liberalism. This movement had a profound effect on the economic and political structures of the post-World War II world, structures which are still firmly in place.

Geneva, and, specifically, the Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales, was a major focus of the European neo-liberal movement. Röpke taught there from 1937 until his death in 1966, and Ludwig von Mises, with whom Röpke maintained close contact, taught at the Institute from 1934 to 1940 (Röpke 1987, p. viii). Rougier, too, taught courses there, and was a frequent visitor.¹ It is no wonder that the intellectually gregarious Rougier – based in Besançon and Lyon, and so within easy reach of Switzerland – gravitated towards Geneva. Of the leading neo-liberals, he appears to have been a particular friend of Mises, and maintained contact with Hayek until the 1970s.

Rougier was a pioneer of the neo-liberal movement and a leader of the movement in its early stages. Beginning in the 1920s, he published many articles and several books which sought directly to address the totalitarian challenges of the left and of the right. His two most significant books on political and economic themes are *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines et leurs incidences internationales* (1935a) – which was discussed in the previous chapter – and *Les mystiques économiques* (1938; 2nd ed. 1949). In these books, and in other works prefiguring, recapitulating or elaborating his accustomed social, political and economic themes, Rougier sought to expose the errors of contemporary 'mystiques' or ideologies. The social and economic philosophy which emerges mixes liberal, pragmatic and conservative elements (though Rougier himself rejects the conservative label).

According to Rougier, laissez-faire liberalism had in the 19th century become an orthodoxy, a passive philosophy based on a static view of society which was seen as operating according to natural laws, absolute and eternal, like the laws of physics (1949, p. 72). Adherents of this view tended to analyze society in an essentially economic manner, but Rougier explicitly rejects this notion of the primacy of economic over political factors (1949, p. 75). He argues that a true laissez-faire approach leads inevitably, through free competition and a process of "natural selection", to an illiberal monopolistic economy, an essentially plutocratic regime (Rougier 1949, p. 34). In place of the orthodox laissez-faire doctrine, Rougier puts forward a "constructive liberalism" which sanctions a certain level of economic interventionism – such as anti-trust laws – to maintain a free and competitive market system. He emphasizes the need to take account of actual conditions of the time (both domestic and international) in framing economic policy. Great restraint and careful judgement were required however. Rougier realized that, if state controls go so far as to usurp market forces, the result is oppression. A controlled economy is necessarily arbitrary, inefficient and despotic (Rougier 1949, p. 193).

As previously observed, Rougier rejected atomistic individualism and saw despotism as being implicit in any system of majoritarian democracy. It was necessary, he believed, to promote technical and social elites in order to protect minority interests and maintain social cohesion. These notions were not only in accord with Renan's later political views (as outlined in Chapter 8), but also with the official social and political teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which combined a commitment to the freedom and dignity of the individual with corporatist elements. In an article appended to the 2nd edition of *Les mystiques économiques*, Rougier himself emphasizes the compatibility of his constructive liberalism with Catholic social and political views. According to the official Catholic line, organizations such as workers' syndicates and professional bodies had an important role to play in the peaceful resolution of class conflicts (Rougier 1949, p. 238).²

But Rougier's social philosophy is in no sense sectarian, and is seen only in its true perspective in the context of the European neo-liberal movement which Rougier himself helped to create. It seems important, then, to present the key features and figures of this extremely influential movement, noting the parallels with Rougier's thought.

The commitment to a market economy is, of course, basic to European neo-liberalism, but so are other factors, political and cultural. An article by C.J. Friedrich, entitled 'The political

thought of neo-liberalism' (1955), provides an interesting introduction to these broader issues. An ambivalent attitude to democracy and a concomitant commitment to elitism are two of this tradition's defining features. Friedrich elaborates on the ambiguous attitude of the continental neo-liberals to democracy:

Although their idea of the constitution as the creative act of instituting the free market economy requires an elaboration of their image of man along democratic lines, showing that he is capable of much 'common sense,' they do not see democracy in this perspective. There is a general tendency to confuse constitutional democracy with the anarchic majoritarian democracy that the jacobins read into Rousseau, and to see totalitarian dictatorship as its inescapable fruit. (Friedrich 1955, p. 518)

The other main distinguishing feature of this strand of European liberalism is its attachment to the cultural – and, after a fashion, even the religious – heritage of Europe.

The roots of neo-liberalism lay in the classical liberal tradition. Classical liberals, such as Tocqueville, were explicitly appealed to. The neo-liberals also drew on the writings of contemporaries such as Walter Lippmann. Lippmann's book, *The good society* (1937), was 'very highly regarded by the whole [European] neo-liberal movement...' (Friedrich 1955, p. 510). That Rougier was instrumental in publicizing Lippmann's ideas in the late 1930s puts him at the center of the tradition described by Friedrich.³

In 1938, Rougier wrote a very favourable review of Lippmann's *La cité libre* (French translation of *The good society*) in which he roundly attacks the ideas of both Marx and Hitler, and says that Lippmann's book should be read by everyone concerned with the future of civilization and culture which was threatened by barbarism and a looming apocalyptic war. That year, he organized an important international conference in Paris to discuss Lippmann's thought (Allais 1990, p. 12).⁴

Lippmann is not unlike Ferrero in having written for a general rather than an academic public, in having achieved great fame and influence during his lifetime, but scant posthumous recognition. Given his importance for the neo-liberal movement, and for an understanding of Rougier's thought, a brief account of his views is called for.

In his discussion of Lippmann, Noël O'Sullivan groups him with Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss, for both of whom the principle error of modern social science is the attempt to separate

facts and values in the interest of achieving a value-free methodology (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 131). O'Sullivan sees such thinkers as attempting to rediscover the objective, intelligible world order of a Plato, an Aristotle or an Aquinas in which human individuals and everything else have a specific place assigned to them, an intrinsic function or purpose.

Charles Wellborn's study of Lippmann's thought (1969) emphasizes the religious roots of his social philosophy. Lippmann's thinking passed through a socialistic, Sorelian phase, then a positivistic phase before returning, in the mid-1930s, to an appreciation of the power and importance of myth. In *The good society* (1937) he returned to his early positive evaluation of myth and used Sorelian notions of a social myth or vital lie to interpret the stance assumed by the classical liberals of the 17th and 18th centuries. These thinkers, having argued with some success for legally enforceable rights, convinced themselves (in Lippmann's words)

... that the legal rights enforceable in the courts were in essence superhuman. They taught that the laws merely declared inalienable and therefore unalterable rights with which men had been endowed by their Creator... (Cited in Wellborn (1969, p. 141).)

This was the "great myth" by which a new social order was made possible. Lippmann came to see such myths as containing profound insights into the realities of existence. Renan, of course, had a similar attitude to myth, as did (and do) many exponents of liberal Protestant and Catholic thought.

Lippmann based his notion of a public philosophy on the old Western tradition of natural law, appealing to both classical and Christian sources. For example, in his *Essays in the public philosophy* (1955), in attempting to establish the reality and importance of what he calls 'man's second nature', he appeals, as did Rougier some years earlier in combatting the reductionism of certain strands of logical positivism, to Plato's account of the death of Socrates; but Lippmann also appeals to a number of Christian philosophers and theologians, including Newman (1955, p. 138) and Tillich (1955, pp. 164-165). For Lippmann, the value-relativism of the prevailing philosophers can lead only to anomie and nihilism. He is particularly concerned with the 'death of God' idea which crystallizes the problem. Nietzsche and Sartre are his chief targets, and representative of the 'prevailing philosophers' who 'have ceased to believe that behind the metaphors and sacred images there is any kind of independent reality that can be known and must be recognized' (Lippmann 1955, p. 176).

Lippmann is concerned, then, to defend not only an objective order of truth but also an objective order of values which for him clearly must have a spiritual or metaphysical (and not just a social or historical) foundation. The acceptance of such an objective order, accessible to human reason, is the only bulwark against the Jacobin ideology, the notion of mass democracy to which the public philosophy is profoundly opposed. Lippmann's is an elitist vision which owes nothing to Nietzsche. It is based on notions of renunciation, and draws on the tradition of paternalistic utilitarianism.

The public philosophy is addressed to the government of our appetites and passions by the reasons of a second, civilized, and, therefore, acquired nature. Therefore, the public philosophy cannot be popular. For it aims to resist and to regulate those very desires and opinions which are most popular. The warrant of the public philosophy is that while the regime it imposes is hard, the results of rational and disciplined government will be good. And so, while the right but hard decisions are not likely to be popular when they are taken, the wrong and soft decisions will, if they are frequent and big enough, bring on a disorder in which freedom and democracy are destroyed. (Lippmann 1955, p. 162)

It is not surprising that Lippmann's writings struck a chord with Rougier. Common themes abound. From his earliest writings, Rougier had embraced the inheritance of utilitarianism coupled with a strong belief in the need to maintain political and social elites which would be capable of making hard and unpopular decisions in the interests of long-term welfare and stability.

Rougier's writings also exhibit, as we have seen, a commitment to spiritual value, and this notion gradually came to the fore. By 1930 he was insisting, in similar terms to T.S. Eliot, on the importance of a spiritual culture (Rougier 1930b, pp. 913, 920). In his middle period, Rougier occupies an awkward middle ground, drawn on the one hand to views like Lippmann's which affirm an objective order of values accessible to human reason, and yet also attracted to logical empiricism, which unequivocally rejects the existence of such an order.

Rougier's position may be compared to that of perhaps the most influential and celebrated of the European neo-liberals, F.A. Hayek. Like Rougier, Hayek was marked by the values of 'modern social science' – to use O'Sullivan's phrase – and struggled to reconcile what might be termed the ideological (conservative and liberal) and pragmatic elements of his thought.

Of all the European neo-liberals, Hayek was perhaps closest in spirit to the logical positivists, not least because of his explicit ethical non-cognitivism and his sustained attempt to base his approach on technical and economic, rather than normative and political, factors. Kley (1994) emphasizes Hayek's instrumental perspective. If Hayek is seen as pursuing the project of a normative liberal theory, inconsistencies become evident. Kley identifies a variety of conservative, Kantian and utilitarian arguments in Hayek's writings which do not mesh well together. The result is a 'hotchpotch' (Kley 1994, p. 227). Better, according to Kley, to read him as

... offering an instrumental justification of liberalism. Such an interpretation can make sense of his views about the limits to rational debate in ethics and about the scientific nature of the argument. (1994, p. 12)

Hayek's main concern is with social theory, and he only utilizes moral arguments as a last resort, when his instrumental reasoning 'runs out of steam and is unable on its own to settle important questions a liberal theory must answer' (Kley 1994, p. 12). His attitude to religion is similar to his attitude to morality. Religion was, for Hayek, a 'necessary myth' (Kley 1994, pp. 93-94).

Rougier might usefully be read in a similar way to the way Kley reads Hayek. Certainly, his primary orientation is descriptive and technical, like Hayek's. It is worth recalling also that Rougier, following Renan, emphasized the instrumental value of religion.

Also, both Rougier and Hayek maintained a profound commitment to the European and Western heritage. It was this shared perspective which prompted Hayek to facilitate the publication in America of *The genius of the West* (1971), one of only two books by Rougier to have been published in English.

Though Rougier did espouse a form of relativism, based on the notion of the incompatibility of different languages and logics, Hayek is more explicit than Rougier on the issue of value relativism, emphasizing that cultural evolution involves continually changing values and criticizing belief in the immutability of our moral rules (Kley 1994, p. 192). Hayek writes that

... demands for justice are simply inappropriate to a naturalistic evolutionary process – inappropriate not just to what has happened in the past but to what is going on at present... *Evolution cannot be just.* (1988, p. 74)

Rougier, on the other hand, is more inclined, as we have noted, to suggest that a "timeless morality" may be seen to reveal itself in certain traditions of Western religion and social thought. On this, Rougier is closer to Lippmann than Hayek.

Differences between Hayek and Rougier also appear with regard to their respective views on the role of government. According to Hayek, the functional requirements of spontaneous orders allow only minimal institutional variation, and, on this score he could be seen to be vulnerable. Kley, for example, criticizes Hayek for identifying one form of liberalism as the only viable political solution. It may be, admits Kley, that any successful system must allow an important role for free markets.

Yet how far they should extend, how far they should be constrained and in what ways supplemented, and in what kind of political framework they should be embedded, cannot be decided on grounds of feasibility alone. (Kley 1994, p. 229)

Kley's objection would have been endorsed by Rougier whose "constructive liberalism", while granting a central role to the market, gave significant weight also to political factors, recognizing – perhaps more clearly than Hayek – the desirability of political interventions to constrain and to supplement market forces.

Rougier made his position on this matter fairly clear in a 1958 article on neo-liberalism. Here, he draws a distinction between neo-liberals and 'liberals of strict observance'.

La divergence, du moins apparente, entre libéraux de stricte observance et néo-libéraux intervient seulement au sujet des interventions des pouvoirs publics. (Rougier 1958, p. 184)

[The divergence, at least apparent, between liberals of strict observance and neo-liberals occurs only in respect of their views concerning the interventions of public authorities.]

The former believe all public intervention to be harmful ('nocive'). The latter see such intervention as necessary for the proper functioning of the free market, and also to ensure that socio-economic disparities do not grow so wide as to threaten social harmony.

The position of Ludwig von Mises on these issues is also worth some consideration, given his personal closeness to Rougier. In brief, Mises seems to combine a rejection of moral relativism with an advocacy for the free market beyond anything Rougier ever sanctioned. Mises' position may seem to be less consistent than that of Hayek (whose instrumentalism and moral relativism could be seen to justify, or at least to be entirely compatible with, his view that the economic should take priority over the political); and less consistent also than Rougier's position (which combined a belief in a "timeless morality" with a commitment to the priority of the political over the economic).

These comments on Mises should, of course, be read in conjunction with my comments in Chapter 7 on Mises' views on religion and metaphysics. It will be recalled that Mises advocated a form of methodological dualism and was quite hostile to 'materialists' like Russell. Paradoxically, Mises saw secularism as the only way to preserve spiritual freedom. Of particular relevance to the present context are Mises' views on natural law. In *Theory and history* (1958, p. 45), he attempts to isolate the essential features of a truth, which, as he saw it, the natural law tradition was groping towards. Essentially, he identified this truth with a critical rationalism and utilitarianism. According to Mises, two main factors hindered progress towards this goal.

In his discussion of the first of these factors, dogmatic Christianity, Mises draws explicitly on Rougier's critique of scholastic philosophy (Mises 1958, p. 46). He emphasizes the point that, within a Thomistic system, reason could never be entirely free, since it would always be constrained by dogmatic elements. Secular, utilitarian reasoning would never hold sway in this context.

A second factor which, according to Mises (1958, p. 47), hindered the development of the notion of natural law toward a 'consistent and comprehensive system of human action' was also a favorite topic of Rougier's: the erroneous theory of the biological equality of all human beings.⁵ In reacting against the privileges of a stratified society, the advocates of the natural law doctrine associated themselves with the patently untrue doctrine of biological equality, thus bringing, according to Mises, the whole philosophy of natural law into disrepute, and jeopardizing the valuable notion of equality before the law.

In terms of his philosophy of history, Mises is very close to Rougier. Mises' view, like Rougier's, derives from a particular epistemology, incorporating an awareness of the limitations of human knowledge and reason, but also a high regard for human reason as a critical faculty.

Indeed, Mises' 'critical rationalism' appears to owe something to Rougier's philosophical writings. In his major work, *Human action: a treatise on economics* (1963, p. 73), Mises refers to Rougier as a rationalist who was aware of rationalism's dangers. Rougier had (in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a)) warned about the dangers of rationalism's inherent tendency to overreach itself, to claim too much for unaided human reason. Mises (1958, p. 379) mocks those – like Hegel, Comte and Marx – who never doubt their own omniscience. Each of these 'soothsayers' was

... fully convinced that he was the man whom the mysterious powers providently directing all human affairs had elected to consummate the evolution of historical change. Henceforth nothing of importance could ever happen. There was no longer any need for people to think. (Mises 1958, p. 379)

Thought and thinking were thus indicators of the health of a society. An exaggerated rationalism leads to a static ideal, to the unattainable – and, probably, undesirable – ideal of paradise, which Mises refers to as the chimera of a perfect state of mankind (1958, p. 362). Mises' critique applies equally to both cyclical and linear theories, and to theories of regression as well as to theories of progress. A state of perfection is by definition a changeless state, and therefore a-historical. But

... [i]t is man's nature to strive ceaselessly after the substitution of more satisfactory conditions for less satisfactory. This motive stimulates his mental energies and prompts him to act. Life in a perfect frame would reduce man to a purely vegetative existence. (Mises 1958, p. 363)

In other words, the anxiety of thought is central to human dignity.

In spirit, Rougier and Mises are very close. As I have noted, Mises drew on Rougier's works, and Rougier drew on Mises, in particular on his critique of socialism. Rougier's 1938 article which reviewed Lippmann's *La cité libre* also discussed *Le socialisme* by Ludwig von Mises.

According to Rougier (1938a), the works of Lippmann and Mises (together with a book of his own⁶, also published that year by the Librairie de Médicis) seek at once to diagnose the problems of the time, and to propose a cure. The diagnosis differed from the standard view which saw socialism, in its attempt to deliver social justice to the masses, locked in an inexorable struggle with the forces of fascism, the last refuge of capitalism. Instead, Rougier,

Lippmann and Mises suggest that the real battle is not between socialism and fascism, but rather between liberalism and various forms of state planning ('le planisme étatique').

Non seulement les marxistes, confirme Mises, mais aussi la plupart de ceux qui se prétendent antimarxistes, mais dont la pensée est complètement imprégnée de marxisme, ont pris à leur compte les dogmes arbitraires, établis sans preuves, facilement réfutables, de Marx. (Rougier 1938a, p. 711)

[Mises confirms that not only Marxists, *but also the majority of those who purport to be anti-Marxists*, have adopted the arbitrary dogmas – unproved and easily refutable – of Marx. Their thought is utterly suffused with Marxist ideas.]

Fascism, communism, socialism and other economic and political ideologies which are based on state planning have much in common, and all are incompatible with economic and political liberalism. Rougier's implicit appeal is to the doctrine of the 'indivisibility of liberty'⁷, and to a particular view of humanity as, I would suggest, 'spiritual' in some sense. Nonetheless, his arguments, like those of Mises and the other neo-liberals, are largely instrumental.

The question Mises poses, says Rougier, is not whether socialism is desirable, but whether it is realizable. According to Mises' analysis, a socialist economy cannot succeed because the free market (the plebiscite of prices) is the only practicable way of calculating the optimal arrangement of the means of production to best satisfy, in order of urgency and precedence, the needs and the wants of consumers (Rougier 1938a, p. 711). In a planned economy, on the other hand, prices lose their significance. They no longer result from supply and demand, and are neither coefficients of equilibrium, nor indices of position.

The problem of economic calculation is the essential theme of Mises' book on socialism, recapitulated in his later work, *Human action*. It was a favorite theme of Hayek's also, but Mises is credited with doing the pioneering work in the area. For Mises, the problem of socialism *is* the problem of economic calculation. In a socialist economy, central planners have no rational basis to determine how to use resources in production. By abolishing private property and the market system, socialism destroys the only conceivable procedure for comparing the social value of diverse goods: market prices. As Rougier emphasizes, a socialist economy doesn't work for technical reasons, and so moral or ideological imperatives may be deemed irrelevant. He quotes Mises to the effect that even a society of angels (assuming they

were endowed with only human reason) would not be able to form a socialist community (Rougier 1938a, p. 712).

The shared themes and mutual indebtedness of Rougier and Mises is too large a topic to cover here in any detail, but certain points should be made. On many fundamental epistemological, metaphysical, social and moral issues, the two thinkers are very close, and they read and referred to each other's works. But Mises was, or became, an unabashed advocate of laissez-faire economics, and seems, during his later, American years, to have had few reservations about big business, American-style. See, for example, Mises (1958, p. 147). Rougier, on the other hand, would always distance himself from the laissez-faire doctrine, and emphasize the need to regulate and constrain the market.⁸

This survey of Rougier's links with European neo-liberalism would not be complete without a brief account of the views of a very significant thinker whose social and economic thought was in fact closer to Rougier's than that of Hayek or Mises. Wilhelm Röpke was the most prominent of the European neo-liberals to continue working in continental Europe after the war, and one of the few theorists named by Rougier in his 1958 article.⁹ He was also cited – indeed he is the only contemporary economist mentioned – in *The genius of the West*, a work which incorporates a popular presentation of Rougier's economic and political ideas.¹⁰

Röpke's thinking, like that of Hayek and Mises was well attuned to Anglo-American concerns.¹¹ But, again, the characteristic concerns of the European neo-liberals reveal themselves in his writings – and indeed he seems to have remained truer to the original tenets of European neo-liberalism than did Mises and Hayek, who spent their later years in an Anglo-American milieu.

Indeed, Röpke was a distinctively European thinker. He recalled that his time at the University of Istanbul (from 1933 to 1937) led him to realize that he was not only a German but 'before all a European and a product of Western civilization' (Röpke 1987, p. viii). This is very much in the spirit of Rougier who, of course, devoted the greater part of his intellectual energies to the task of defining, analysing and celebrating the European heritage. Röpke is like Rougier too in advocating a somewhat constrained free market.

Though strongly opposed to socialism, Röpke was not a defender of 'Capitalism'. He preferred the term 'market economy'. But the market economy is not presented as a panacea, merely as a solution to the particular problem of the economic order (Röpke 1987, p. 6). The socialist seeks

(unsuccessfully) to solve a range of social and economic problems. By contrast, Röpke, rejecting all forms of centralized economic planning ('collectivism'), advocates the market economy as the only viable solution to the problem of economic order. But, in so doing, he recognizes that a huge range of social, legal and cultural problems remain to be addressed.

Like Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, Röpke came to believe that looming economic and social problems could only be solved if a broader perspective were adopted. Consequently, his later works devoted a great deal of attention to the political and social context within which economic systems operate.

Röpke's work prefigured some elements both of contemporary monetarism and of supply-side economics. He criticized misguided government intervention in the economic process and correctly predicted the stagflation problems experienced by the U.S. and other industrial economies during the 1970s and 1980s (Röpke 1987, p. x). His writings are in accord with the basic principles of contemporary supply-side economics in so far as they argue that high taxes tend to distort individual choice, with negative effects on the supply of productive inputs. He also endorses the theory of investment inflation of the Austrian school, and emphasizes the need for government (or Central Bank) controls (Röpke 1987, pp. 86-87).

But his approach to inflation is not merely technical. He sees inflation as a profound problem – not just a complex one. The underlying causes 'lie very much deeper than most people think'. The 'illness of money' is 'a moral and a social disease' (Röpke 1987, p. 93).

Writing on social welfare, he readily admits that 'the problem of provision against the vicissitudes of life' is not in the first instance a technical question, but rather a problem of social philosophy (Röpke 1987, p. 62). He even speaks of the need to keep in mind 'the ideal pattern of society' when making decisions regarding state support for welfare provision (Röpke 1987, p. 63). Later, in arguing that such support should be the exception rather than the rule, he uses language which betrays his essentially moral and cultural preoccupations.

The rule, the norm, the gladly accepted ideal, if we are serious about the basis of our culture, should be self-reliance and the various forms of voluntary mutual assistance within existing communities... (Röpke 1987, p. 65)

Throughout the course of his economic analysis, Röpke emphasizes the central importance of individual attitudes. He is interested not only in the moral, but also in the cultural dimension.

Summing up his reservations about 'compulsory provision', he refers to a personal experience, an experience which reveals much about his underlying commitments and motivations. He recalls being deeply moved by 'one of the most overpowering of all works of occidental art, the paintings by Tintoretto on the walls and ceilings of the halls in the Scuola di San Rocco at Venice' (Röpke 1987, p. 67). This institution was an ecclesiastical welfare society, and the artist is reputed not to have asked for a fee. Contrasting the modern welfare state with a system based on voluntary brotherhoods, Röpke writes:

Let us make the bold assumption that there is, today, an artist of the rank of Tintoretto. Could we imagine a Welfare State office which would have him decorate its rooms, and could we imagine a Tintoretto who, carried away by his task, would sacrifice himself to this work, for the greater glory of God, and for the sake of beauty and charity? (Röpke 1987, p. 68)

Not only does one get an insight here into Röpke's conservative aesthetic, which, focused as it is on the art of the Renaissance, has much in common with Rougier's, one also sees clearly from this fanciful speculation that Röpke is fundamentally concerned with states of mind, with quality of life – and not merely with the technical apparatus of economics and politics.

Röpke's rejection of the welfare state is associated with a rejection of revolution and 'Jacobinism'. Such allusions enable one to see that he is closely aligned to elements of French liberal conservatism.¹² He argues that the welfare state has an essentially revolutionary character, and that free higher education in Britain is an example of 'cultural Jacobinism' (Röpke 1987, pp. 72-73).

Most significant, perhaps, is his emphasis on the importance of the cultivated society, so evident in the Tintoretto anecdote. Commercialization is the paradoxical consequence of the welfare state, for which everything becomes an object of calculation (Röpke 1987, pp. 80-81). In such a society the general atmosphere becomes oppressive, and 'everything that Burke included in the expression, "unbought graces of life", all these are strangled by the choking grip of the State' (Röpke 1987, p. 80).

Narrower and narrower grows the scope for such income as is available for charity, a cultivated way of life, and a certain liberality of expenditure; rarer and rarer becomes

the climate in which liberalism, variety, true community, and nobleness can thrive.
(Röpke 1987, p. 81)

Clearly, Röpke is not only liberal, but conservative, and his conservatism derives from his strong identification with the classical elements of the European heritage. Here, as elsewhere, the parallels with Rougier are obvious.

One point is worth emphasizing, however. Röpke's arguments against the welfare state appeal not only to pragmatic factors, but also to what might be termed spiritual values. The thrust of his thinking is decidedly anti-materialistic: he disparages the welfare state by associating it with the mentality of commerce. Rougier's criticisms of commercialism and materialism, and the view that everything has a price, have been discussed elsewhere, in connection with his early analysis of the sources of modern capitalism. He too links commercialism to revolution.

... [L]a révolution bolchevique a amené le règne de la classe moyenne commerçante tout comme la Révolution a favorisé l'avènement de la bourgeoisie d'affaires. (Rougier 1929, p. 62)

[... [T]he Bolshevik revolution led to the reign of the commercial middle class, just as the [French] Revolution favored the rise of the business *bourgeoisie*.]

It will also be recalled that Rougier – like Röpke – supports the traditional notion of charity as exemplified in certain medieval institutions, as well as placing great emphasis on self-discipline, self-reliance and individual freedom.

Rougier, no less than Röpke, warns about the insidious dangers associated with the involvement of the state in more and more aspects of life.

As societies grow more and more complex, the state tends to become more grasping and inclusive. To realize the great society of universal comfort, the Welfare State, governments proceed to take from the individual his responsibilities by relieving him of all risks. (Rougier 1971, p. 187)

Rougier quotes a long passage from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* on the stultifying effects on individuals of benign state control (1971, pp. 187-188), a passage very much in the spirit of Röpke's above-cited comments.

But the implicit or explicit rejection of materialism by Rougier, Röpke and other neo-liberals may be seen to pose certain problems. Specifically, it might be asked what basis there is for this implicit idealism, for this commitment to what might be termed spiritual values. This issue is essentially the same one which was raised by Roland Kley in his discussion of Hayek. The instrumental elements of Hayek's thought were in conflict with normative elements. Arguably these normative elements were stronger for Rougier than they were for Hayek, lying behind his strong commitment to the intrinsic importance of political, social and cultural values.

How then can such commitments be justified? Pragmatic considerations may take one a certain distance from economic libertarianism, as a strong case can be made that a market economy does indeed require a strong legal framework, anti-trust laws etc., in order to work effectively. But Rougier – and other neo-liberals such as Röpke – go beyond this notion, and appeal, either implicitly or explicitly to values which transcend mere economics.

Rougier passionately believed in the values of thought and culture and character and progress. In other words he had a view of humankind as being more – or at least having the capacity to be more – than merely a comfort- or pleasure-seeking animal species. And, as is clear from a number of his writings (most notably, perhaps, his 1929 work, *La mystique démocratique*) he believed that the state has a role in developing a system which embodies these higher values, and which encourages the formation of elites based on intellectual and artistic ability and achievement. The Manchester school and Marxism, by contrast, accept the unconditional primacy of the economic.

In fact, no social philosophy can be built solely on the basis of objective scientific analysis, and Rougier often makes the point that science is not enough: it must be supplemented by choices based on values. But, in his social and political writings, he is not always clear on this need for values, sometimes writing as if an application of the scientific method is sufficient to produce (or reveal?) appropriate ideals or values. For instance, in both *La mystique démocratique* (1929) and *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines* (1935a), politics is seen as method: an application to public affairs of the inductive method of the social sciences. Such a method will expose the various 'mystiques' or ideologies which motivate so many political actors and movements.¹³

In his attempt to provide a scientific basis for his political and economic views, Rougier drew on the purportedly objective critiques and analyses of acknowledged experts in technical areas such as economics. His use of Mises' technical defence of the price mechanism of the free market is an obvious instance. Also, we have previously noted his use of Pareto's sociological and economic ideas (such as his notion of the 'circulation of elites') in his early writings.¹⁴

Bounoure, as we have already observed, provides a particularly unsympathetic perspective on Rougier's scientific and objective persona, and, in particular, on his use of Pareto. According to Bounoure (1987, p. 152), Rougier used Pareto merely to give his views the appearance of scientific objectivity and respectability. He suggests the Rougier drew explicitly on Pareto's critique of ideologies and his theory of elites merely because, unlike the analyses of Renan and Sorel, for instance, Pareto's theories had an aura of scientific respectability.

Even if one rejects the excessive cynicism of this interpretation, it must be admitted that an area of confusion and contradiction in Rougier's social thought has been identified. On the one hand, Rougier saw politics as a matter of method, and his own role as that of an objective specialist merely applying the inductive method of the social sciences to political questions. This notion of technical expertise (or competence) is one to which he often appealed. On the other hand, it is clear, as indeed Rougier readily admits, that political choices are based partly on values, and values cannot be derived from scientific considerations. Unfortunately, Rougier does not always succeed in his writings in keeping his purportedly objective analyses free of value judgements.

This blurring of the distinction between objective and value-based analysis does lend some credence to Bounoure's criticisms. If Rougier did not deliberately utilize the appearance of scientific objectivity for rhetorical and polemical effect, it must be conceded, I think, that he might have achieved greater intellectual clarity had he been more explicit about the role of values and feelings in his own social philosophy, and, indeed, in social philosophy in general.

But, as we have seen, these criticisms may be applied not just to the thought of Rougier, but also to Hayek and other members of the neo-liberal school. All of the European neo-liberals are driven by a strong commitment to a particular historical and cultural tradition, and to certain ideals, most notably freedom, to which that tradition gives clear and forthright expression.

It may be that, after all, total clarity and explicitness are simply not possible in the realm of social and political thought. It may be that any rich and realistic social philosophy must

renounce foundational clarity, and embrace, without ultimate rational justification, specific traditions and values. I am of the view, however, that explicitness and clarity are desirable in all realms of thought, and so see it as a failing of sorts that Rougier and the other thinkers discussed in this chapter did not – either through a lack of self-awareness or through a desire to preserve spiritual privacy – attempt to lay bare and analyse the idealist elements in their thought.

The story of Rougier's association with the European neo-liberal movement does not end happily. For Rougier, who, as we have seen, played a leading role in the movement in the 1930s, was excluded from the re-formed movement after World War II.

In April 1947, on the initiative of Hayek and Röpke¹⁵, an informal ten-day meeting of a group of European and American scholars – all strong believers in political, economic and moral freedom – was held near Vevey (Röpke 1987, pp. viii-ix). Rougier was not invited, apparently because of his perceived links with Vichy and public rows with Churchill. After the meeting, Mises told Rougier that Lionel Robbins had told him that he (Rougier) had been excluded because the English delegates didn't wish to work with someone who had criticized Churchill (Allais 1990, p. 34).¹⁶ This 'excommunication', as Rougier saw it, meant that he would not be a part of the Mont Pèlerin Society, which grew out of that inaugural meeting.¹⁷

Rougier's exclusion from the conference was a very significant blow to a man who was soon to be deprived of his chair, and banned from university teaching by an official commission (Allais 1990, p. 35). In both cases, he would appear to have been ostracized because his published opinions happened not to conform to the prevailing orthodoxy. Rougier did not fail to see the bitter irony of the situation. Referring to his exclusion from the Vevey meeting, he wrote in May 1947:

Un congrès, au nom du libéralisme, qui débute par de singulières excommunications, cela en dit long sur l'esprit de fanatisme et d'intolérance qui règne en Europe. (Allais 1990, p. 34)

[A congress in the name of liberalism which begins with such singular excommunications speaks volumes about the spirit of fanaticism and intolerance which is reigning in Europe.]

¹ Rougier's chief intellectual contributions to the neo-liberal movement (Rougier 1935a and 1949) were based on courses he taught at the Geneva institute. We have previously noted that Rougier's friend Guglielmo Ferrero taught there throughout the 1930s, and Rougier often visited him.

² In a letter of March 1939, Rougier was congratulated by Wilhelm Röpke for succeeding in attracting into the framework of neo-liberalism 'les chefs du syndicalisme'. The syndicalists in question were non-communists – mainly moderate reformers and Catholics (Denord 2001, pp. 28, 29).

³ Rougier also appealed explicitly to Tocqueville – see Rougier (1951). In his *The genius of the West*, he cites Tocqueville on the importance of the decentralization of power for the maintenance of liberty, and the dangers of the Welfare State (1971, pp. 136; 187-188).

⁴ F.A. Hayek makes much of this meeting and Rougier's leadership role. Rougier, says Hayek, 'did much to start the movement for the revival of the basic principles of a free society which is now one of the hopeful signs of our times' (Rougier 1971, p. xvi). The body which formed out of the 1938 meeting was suspended at the outbreak of war, but, immediately after the war, 'it was around the group Professor Rougier had brought together that a larger international association of friends of personal liberty was formed'. As we will see, Rougier himself was no longer involved at that stage. Articles by T. Lecoq (1989) and François Denord (2001) provide scholarly support for Hayek's comments. Denord charts in some detail the development of neo-liberalism as an economic philosophy in the 1930s, assigning to Rougier the leading role in the process: 'Il a joué un rôle de prophète dans la naissance du néo-libéralisme' (2001, p. 10). Denord's focus is on the institutional history of the movement (rather than on broader cultural or ideological dimensions). He agrees with Hayek on the importance of the 1938 Colloquium and he too sees the short-lived association which grew directly out of that meeting as being a precursor and model for the Mont Pèlerin Society. Denord also highlights the importance of the Librairie de Medicis, which published Rougier's *Les mystiques économiques* in 1938. It seems that Rougier played a decisive role in deciding which books would be published (Denord 2001, p. 18). (After the war, the Librairie de Medicis refused to deal with Rougier on account of his Vichy associations.)

⁵ See my discussion of the views of Rougier and Mises on evolution and race in Chapter 13.

⁶ The book in question was the first edition of *Les mystiques économiques*. (Professional modesty was not one of Rougier's virtues.)

⁷ Both Anglo-American and European neo-liberals assert the 'indivisibility of liberty', that is, they contend that a free economic order (market economy) is a necessary condition for a liberal political order. The commitment of the American and British New Right to this doctrine is well-known; it was also a key element in the thought of European neo-liberals, Rougier included. See, for example Rougier (1947, p. 81). O'Sullivan cites Wilhelm Röpke, who asserts that we cannot have 'political and spiritual liberty without also choosing liberty in the economic field and rejecting the necessarily unfree collectivist economic order' (O'Sullivan 1976, p.139).

⁸ He does not mention Mises in his definitive 1958 article on neo-liberalism, and it is unclear to what extent he saw Mises as having moved away from the core principles of the European neo-liberal tradition.

⁹ Rougier refers to Röpke's analysis of inflation (1958, p. 193). Other thinkers cited in the article include Lippmann (p. 183) and Jacques Rueff (p. 189).

¹⁰ The most significant of these references concerns the crippling effect of state monopolies (Rougier 1971, p. 157).

¹¹ Significantly, it was Röpke that one important commentator (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 139) quoted when discussing the common elements of the two traditions.

¹² Röpke was very much attuned to French cultural influences, and his literary pantheon seems to have much in common with Rougier's. The fact that, even in a brief work on economic themes, he makes passing mention of Pascal and of Renan (1987, pp. 14-17; 64) is further evidence that Röpke and Rougier share a broader tradition of thought.

¹³ A particular target, especially in the earlier works, was the democratic mystique, which derives from a passionate commitment to the demonstrably false idea of natural equality. Rougier wrote as if this 'dogma of equality' could be demonstrated to be false by the scientific method, and clarified by historical analysis. (Rougier was respectful – as noted in Chapter 10 – of the doctrine of civil and legal – as distinct from natural – equality.)

¹⁴ In fact, Rougier's *La mystique démocratique* was dedicated to Pareto's memory.

¹⁵ Maurice Allais, a participant, recalled that the organizers were Hayek and Lionel Robbins (Allais 1990, p. 34).

¹⁶ It might be thought that a more plausible explanation for Rougier's omission might relate to his lack of technical expertise in economics – but Hayek's inaugural address to the meeting gives the lie to this

speculation. Hayek specifically sought to include historians and philosophers as well as economists (Hayek 1992, p. 240).

¹⁷ There were three Frenchmen at the meeting: Allais, Bertrand de Jouvenel and François Trevous (Hayek 1992, p. 237). Other French thinkers invited to the meeting were René Courtin, Charles Rist, Jacques Rueff, Roger Truptil and D. Villey. Though unable to attend, they all agreed to join as original members (Hayek 1992, p. 241).

Chapter 12

Rougier and the European New Right

Excluded from the official activities and conferences of his former circle of liberal friends and colleagues, as well as – for ten years after the war – from university teaching, Rougier appears to have refocused his intellectual energies on the history and philosophy of science, epistemology and language, and to have given less attention to social and political topics. 1955 saw the publication of his *Traité de la connaissance*, a major work of epistemology with a strong scientific focus. When, in 1955, he was finally allowed to return to university teaching, it was to a professorship in the philosophy of science (at Caen). Another major work, *La métaphysique et le langage*, appeared in 1960.

It would not be surprising if Rougier's experiences of the late 1940s had been a decisive factor in his decision to devote most of his intellectual and professional energies to non-political areas. Those bad experiences might also help to explain why he avoids any mention of his social and political thought in the 'philosophical itinerary' he wrote for *La revue libérale* in 1961.

Rougier did not, however, entirely abandon political themes during the 1950s, and he appears to have maintained strong links with various French right-wing groups and, notably, with figures associated with the journal *Ecrits de Paris*.¹

In fact, it was at a meeting sponsored by this journal that Rougier made the acquaintance of some young activists with whom he would collaborate in forming the agenda of a movement built around an organization called GRECE (Groupement de recherches et d'études pour la civilisation Européenne). This movement came to be known as the Nouvelle Droite.

GRECE was set up (though not formally constituted) in the summer of 1967 by Alain de Benoist, Jean-Claude Valla and others (Bounoure 1987, p. 163). Rougier was almost certainly involved.

In the volatile world of French culture and politics, this organization proved to be remarkably successful. In an article published in 1998 on local government initiatives in southern French towns controlled by the National Front, Christiane Chombeau refers to GRECE. The initiatives

in question included various cultural events (including an 'Indo-European ballet' and a celebration of the centenary of the Italian philosopher, Julius Evola) which were

... totally in keeping with the philosophy of the 'new right' and the Research and Study Group on European Civilisation (Grece). The Grece is a self-styled 'society of thought' which has strongly influenced some sections of the far right over the past thirty years. (Chombeau 1998, p. 18)

Bounoure quotes Maurice Bardèche² writing in 1979:

Le GRECE fut fondé il y a quatorze ou quinze ans sur l'initiative de Louis Rougier, alors professeur à l'Université de Caen. (Bounoure 1987, p. 144)

[GRECE was founded fourteen or fifteen years ago on the initiative of Louis Rougier, then a professor at the University of Caen.]

In fact, GRECE was not formally constituted until January 1968, but Rougier's association with its predecessor organisations dates back at least to 1965 (Bounoure 1987, p. 162). Bounoure writes of the Rougier of this time:

Septuagénaire, il joua alors le rôle de maître pour les jeunes extrémistes qui, issus pour la plupart d'*Europe-Action*, trouvèrent dans ses écrits la méthode et le corps de doctrine dont ils manquaient singulièrement pour valider leur discours 'raciste européen'. (Bounoure 1987, p. 144)

[A septuagenarian, he played the role at this time of a mentor for the young extremists who, having come for the most part from *Europe-Action*, found in his writings the method and body of doctrine they had hitherto singularly lacked to validate their 'racist European' polemics.]

Bounoure also cites the view of P.A. Taguieff that, with respect to the intellectual origins of GRECE, the importance of Rougier should not be underestimated (Bounoure 1987, p. 145).

Rougier's own recollections serve to confuse the issue somewhat. In 1979 he recalled an event that clearly made a great impression on him, but the implicit chronology is implausible. He refers to a meeting with some young activists who approached him during a gathering organised

by the review *Ecrits de Paris*. The young people told him that they read his works and considered him a kind of 'maître à penser'. Confusingly, he adds:

J'ai appris que ces jeunes gens avaient fondé dans toute la France, et même en Belgique et en Italie, de véritables sociétés de pensée qui, par des journées d'études, des conférences-débats, des colloques, des revues comme *Eléments* et *Nouvelle Ecole*, combattaient ce qu'ils appelaient les techniques d'ahurissement et toutes les formes destructives de l'anti-culture. (Allais 1990, pp. 50-51)

[I learned that these young people had founded throughout France, and even in Belgium and Italy, veritable societies of thought which, through study days, debates, colloquiums and reviews like *Eléments* and *Nouvelle Ecole*, were combatting what they called confusion-creating techniques and all the destructive forms of anti-culture.]

Rougier seems here to be implicitly suggesting the young people who approached him had already at this time founded GRECE, as *Eléments* and *Nouvelle Ecole* were published by GRECE. But, according to Bardèche, Rougier participated in the setting up of GRECE.

I think that Rougier is conflating a number of developments in this account. There is no reason to doubt that the initial unsolicited approach by the young people did happen as he remembered it, but I suspect their activities had not developed at this stage quite as far as Rougier is suggesting. It seems likely that the remembered meeting with the young activists occurred no later than the mid 1960s, that is well before the formation of GRECE and *Nouvelle Ecole* [1967-8].

Rougier's reference to the activities of the young people applies perfectly (apart from the reference to the journals) to the activities of a movement which arose in 1960 out of the remnants of Jeune Nation (dissolved by the government in 1958 as a danger to democracy) and which was based around a review called *Europe-Action*. This movement attracted former members of the right wing and violent FEN (Federation of Nationalist Students), but had opted for non-violent methods (Simmons 1996, p. 47). *Europe-Action* had links with similar groups in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Spain – which accords with Rougier's reference to activities in Belgium and Italy. Rougier's contributions to those earlier movements is unclear. He is mentioned in an issue of *Europe-Action* (June 1966) as having been involved in the setting up at the beginning of 1966 of a *Europe-Action*-inspired political party, the MNP (Mouvement Nationaliste du Progrès), the failure of which led to the formation of GRECE in

1967 (Bounoure 1987, pp. 162-163). Bounoure (1987, p. 163) provides some evidence that Rougier's relations with Europe-Action were already established in 1966. His links with Alain de Benoist also date from about this time.³

As further evidence of Rougier's role, we have warm acknowledgements of debt and friendship on the part of both Alain de Benoist and Rougier. De Benoist wrote:

'[I]l y a ... des maîtres comme en connut la Grèce antique, aussi simples dans leur manières que subtils dans leurs pensées, proches et lointains tout à la fois, et qui, sous les portiques où les chemins se croisent, apprenaient à leurs disciples à se forger le caractère sans lequel l'intelligence n'est rien. Pour l'auteur de ces lignes, le professeur Rougier a été l'un de ceux-là.' (Bounoure 1987, p. 145)

[There are masters such as were known in ancient Greece, as simple in their manners as subtle in their thinking, at once close and distant, who, under the porticos where the roads met, taught their disciples to forge for themselves the character without which intelligence is nothing. For the writer of these lines, Professor Rougier was one such.]

For his part, Rougier was clearly grateful to 'cher Alain de Benoist' for introducing his works to a new, contemporary audience (Allais 1990, p. 51).

Geoffrey Harris, in his account of the extreme right in France, does not mention Rougier, though he does mention Alain de Benoist and GRECE (1994, pp. 89 ff.). Likewise Harvey Simmons (1996), who devotes seven pages to GRECE, its history and doctrine. With respect to the sources of that doctrine, he alludes to 'the German "conservative revolution" of the period 1918 to 1933' (Simmons 1996, p. 211).

Christophe Bourseiller, in his account of the origins of GRECE, merely refers to Rougier as one of the sponsoring committee of the review *Nouvelle Ecole* (1989, p. 179).

Tomislav Sunic, unlike most other commentators, discusses Rougier's contributions to the European New Right at length and without hostility. He refers to Rougier as representing 'the "old guard" of the New Right' (1990, p. 71); elsewhere as the ideologue of the New Right (1990, p. 109).

What then was the nature of Rougier's intellectual relationship with the New Right in France? How does Rougier's thought relate to the ideology of GRECE and daughter or sister movements in other European countries? It must be admitted that the pattern of development of Rougier's thought is not clearcut, nor is it clear to what extent his views actually changed in the course of a long life which encompassed varied historical, professional and personal circumstances. It may seem curious that the apparent softening of his views towards natural rights and perhaps Christianity, and the drift towards mainstream liberalism evident from the 1930s to the 1960s, did not stop him from becoming an active member of the anti-Christian and anti-American New Right in the last 20 years of his life. The nature of the European neo-liberal tradition with which he was associated may help to explain some of the paradoxes, but it must be admitted that the 'unique blend of ideas' (Sunic 1990, p. x) which constitutes the European New Right, though it bears the imprint of Rougier's thought, does not reflect the full range of his commitments. In particular, it is difficult to reconcile Rougier's apparent commitment to liberalism with his role as 'ideologue' of the French New Right.

Sunic points out (1990, p. 6) that, though the European New Right is indebted to various traditional strands of right wing thought (such as liberal conservatism, traditional nationalism, etc.), it cannot be identified with any of these. The label he finds most appropriate is 'revolutionary conservative' (1990, pp. 3, 5). As we will see, it could also be seen to incorporate some reactionary elements, suitably transmuted.

According to Sunic, the essence of the European New Right ideology is as follows. It is anti-communist, anti-socialist, and, to a large extent, anti-liberal. Communism, socialism and liberalism are all seen as ideologies which rest on premises of universalism, egalitarianism and a belief in economic progress, and which all lead to forms of totalitarianism (Sunic 1990, pp. 4-5). Furthermore, these ideologies are seen to have Judeo-Christian roots, whereas the European New Right draws its spiritual inspiration from non-Christian, Indo-European sources (Sunic 1990, p. 8).⁴

The American New Right is a liberal movement committed to (in the eyes of the European New Right) excessive individualism and a secularized Protestantism which has led to the substitution of economics for traditional politics. The European New Right, on the other hand, believes in the primacy of political over economic factors and favours an organic community where the people have a firm sense of historical and spiritual commitment to their community (Sunic 1990, p. 18).

In order to see these differences more clearly, and to clarify the nature of the European traditions of social thought with which Rougier was associated, it would be useful, I think, to employ a simple theoretical framework to help distinguish between moderate right positions, on the one hand, and reactionary, radical or revolutionary positions on the other.

Noël O'Sullivan's analysis of conservatism is well suited to this task. O'Sullivan defines the conservative tradition (with which he strongly identifies) as excluding radical and reactionary positions. He sees the conservative ideology as emerging as a response to the theory and practice of the French revolutionaries (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 9). It represents an opposition, not to change as such, but to the idea of total or radical change, a philosophy of imperfection, of at least limited pessimism. Evil and suffering will not disappear from the world as a result of social revolution or reform. The world 'imposes limitations upon what either the individual or the state can hope to achieve without destroying the stability of society' (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 11). It is a philosophy committed to the defence of a limited style of politics, the primary aim of which is to preserve 'the distinction between private and public life (or between the state and society) which emerged in Europe at the end of the medieval period' (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 12). This notion is close to liberalism, but liberals during the 19th century came increasingly to value progress and the improvement of mankind, in the name of which government might justify interference in every aspect of life, even 'through the imposition of new creeds which politicize the inner, spiritual life of man' (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 13).

A belief in perfectibility, then, might justify the imposition of new creeds, and thus politicize the inner life, whereas a belief in imperfection undermines the rationale of such utopian projects.

But conservatism, though always in some sense a 'philosophy of imperfection', does not in fact always favour limited government, and O'Sullivan recognizes this.

It is true, nevertheless, that a conservative may sometimes conceive of the imperfections of the existing social order as so deep and all-pervasive that he ends by adopting a notion of 'corruption' or 'degeneration' which resembles that from which Nazism and fascism take their rise. (O'Sullivan 1976, p. 14).

So, rather than a simple contrast between conservatism and various non-conservative outlooks, between philosophies of imperfection and perfection, one really needs to specify a more basic dichotomy. O'Sullivan's underlying concern is with this basic dichotomy, which, in fact, he

makes quite explicit in a later work. There (O'Sullivan 1989, pp. 167 ff.) he elaborates on the dichotomy between the ideal of civil association and what he calls 'social politics', the first associated with limited politics and the second with the tendency to politicize the inner life, to seek salvation through politics.

The tendency of conservatives to concern themselves with social politics, to see consensus as a prerequisite for order, was (and still is) particularly strong in France. Extreme conservatives 'from Joseph de Maistre to Charles Maurras and the *Action Française* movement', have, says O'Sullivan (1976, p. 33), rejected the moderate view that order and freedom require only a framework of legality, and insisted upon the need for a substantive consensus.

That is why members of the extreme French conservative school have always been so bitterly opposed to democracy: the primary evil of this form of government, in their eyes, is that it perpetuates discord in the name of freedom and equality, and contains within it no ideal or institution which might restore the consensus which came to an end in 1789. (O'Sullivan 1976. p. 33)

Rougier's social philosophy (and that of some other European neo-liberals) owes something to this tradition. Elements of the tradition described by O'Sullivan are even more clearly evident – albeit in a new guise – in the ideology of the European New Right.

Ferrero's notion of the decadence of quantitative civilizations – which Rougier adopted – parallels the extreme conservative's notions of corruption and degeneration. Rougier attacked the materialism of American civilization, as did Lippmann, and it is a major theme of the French New Right. Rougier's rejection of the Reformation, and his desire to maintain a distinction between the temporal and the spiritual suggests ideological similarities with Charles Maurras and Action Française. Rougier certainly does express, from time to time, a nostalgia for a spiritually unified world – in his account of the Middle Ages in *La France en marbre blanc* (1947), for instance. His rejection of 'pagan' totalitarianism in the same book suggests Maritain's contrast between the Christian world and the pagan empire. Confusingly, he was also, especially in his early writings (the writings which especially influenced the French New Right), an advocate of classical and, indeed, pagan values.

As we have seen, Alain de Benoist and the New Right did not share Rougier's apparent – and at times quite marked – Christian sympathies. Nonetheless, their neo-paganism plays a manifestly

similar role to that played by Catholicism and the institutions of the *ancien régime* for traditional conservatives, providing a basis for spiritual consensus.

One curious feature of the tradition of French extreme conservative social thought which O'Sullivan describes is the emphasis on harmony. One often associates 'extreme' views – the word is of course always contentious – with violent tendencies, but this tradition, as O'Sullivan notes, abhors discord. The fact that Alain de Benoist has criticized the Christian tradition for its implicit violent tendencies⁵ serves to underscore the continuity of his thought and that of the French New Right – despite the explicitly pagan outlook – with older forms of conservatism.

To what extent Rougier espoused the fundamental goals of the New Right remains unclear.⁶ His social writings are arguably less consistent than the writings of, say, Alain de Benoist, but also more liberal.

While Rougier appears to vacillate between Christian and pagan notions – and indeed between a religious and a skeptical perspective – Alain de Benoist has developed a sophisticated and (apparently) consistent spiritual foundation for a projected social consensus. In developing his neo-pagan synthesis, de Benoist draws especially on Heidegger who was, it must be said, not a philosopher Rougier held in high esteem.

However, it is clear that the French New Right found considerable inspiration in Rougier's thought for their radical conservative agenda, and it is clear that Rougier to a large extent sanctioned the use of his writings by the movement, and indeed participated in its development. Two related strands of Rougier's thought which particularly attracted the leaders of the New Right were his emphasis on the notion of radically differing mentalities, and the importance given to specific cultural traditions (such as the Greek and Semitic traditions) in the analysis of the development of human societies. In relation to these issues, the question of racial thinking must be addressed.

¹ *Ecrits de Paris* began publication in 1947, and Rougier wrote for it until 1963. (See Bounoure (1987, p. 159).)

² Bardèche was an unrepentant fascist who, after his prison term, made major contributions to literary criticism.

³ Alain de Benoist speaks of having known Rougier from the mid-1960s until his death. (Personal communication)

⁴ Alain de Benoist has explicitly defended the notion of the sacred, understood in pagan terms. Drawing on a diverse range of thinkers, including Eliade and Heidegger, he has put forward the view that, paradoxically, the secularization of Western society has been caused essentially by Judeo-Christian modes of thinking. The notion of a transcendent God has led ultimately to the absurdity of imagining him dethroned and ourselves in his place, living out a relationship with the world which mimics the God-

creation relationship. See Molnar & de Benoist (1986, p. 218). The New Right's neo-pagan alternative seeks to preserve the distinction between the sacred and the profane without creating a gulf between them.

⁵ See, for example, Molnar & de Benoist (1986, p. 220 and passim.).

⁶ It must be borne in mind, of course, that, since Rougier's death in 1982, there have been profound political changes in Europe – most notably the demise of the Soviet empire – and, in response to these changes, the French New Right has become more anti-American, finding common ground with the radical left. (See Bourseiller (1989, p. 181) and Sunic (1990, pp. xi, 4).)

Chapter 13

The race question

One of the reasons why Rougier does not appear even as a minor figure in the mainstream intellectual canon is because of perceived associations with racism. His links with Vichy raise questions of anti-Semitism, and his association with the French New Right links him in the minds of many with the racially-motivated violence against immigrants which has flared in Europe over the last thirty years. Commentators like Bournoure see the intellectuals of the New Right as promoting xenophobia and even of covertly encouraging the violent actions of extremist activists and thugs. In view of these perceptions, the awkward question of the racial elements in Rougier's thought needs to be directly and dispassionately addressed.

Race is, of course, a major theme in European social thought, and it features particularly in French writings. In his work on political myth, Henry Tudor (1972, pp. 103 ff.) discusses the origins of race-thinking in French and European social and political thought.

Seeking to resist the 18th century threat to the power of the hereditary nobility, the Comte de Boulainvilliers maintained that every major civilisation had been ruled by an aristocracy of the blood. The Frankish invaders of Gaul maintained themselves as an hereditary caste, and so was created the distinction between 'la noblesse' and 'la roture'. Boulainvilliers was somewhat ambivalent on the issue of intermarriage between the classes, but his disciples were not.

In the aristocratic ethic of the late eighteenth century, pure descent in a free-born stock was the sine qua non for rightful access to high office. (Tudor 1972, p. 104)

Prominent amongst those who attacked this notion was Babeuf who questioned the very notion of the right of conquest.¹

The French aristocracy saw themselves at this time as part of an international caste, so that, as Hannah Arendt has pointed out, French racial theorists have tended to support 'Germanism or at least the superiority of the Nordic peoples as against their own countrymen' (cited in Tudor (1972, p. 104)). This tendency was given great impetus by the discovery (touched on in Chapter 3) of the Indo-European language family and so of Indo-European (or Indo-Germanic) culture, and, by extension, the notion of an Indo-European or Aryan race. Max Müller – an important

reference point of Rougier's thinking² – did much to popularise the notion of a conquering Aryan race, though he later repudiated 'the facile identification of linguistic communities with racial groups' (cited in Tudor (1972, p. 105)).

These notions of a racial elite were further boosted by evolutionary theory which at last provided – or seemed to provide – a convincing, scientific justification of the right of conquest which was being questioned in the name of traditional natural law. Here was a new, a scientifically-based natural law. Nature in fact achieves her ends by destroying the weak and preserving the strong. The survival of the fittest was at the heart of evolution, and there seemed no reason not to apply these notions to humans and human society. In Tudor's words, 'the theory could be used to account for the differentiation of the human species into a number of unequally gifted races, and it even lent weight to the view that the salvation of mankind depended on the ultimate victory and predominance of its noblest part' (1972, p. 106).³

Early evolutionary theories were being developed and discussed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Lamarck's major work was published between 1815 and 1822, and philosophers such as the Comte de Saint-Simon [1760-1825] and Auguste Comte [1798-1857] devised theories of human cultural and intellectual development which incorporated evolutionary elements.

More in the tradition of Comte than Darwin, Herbert Spencer [1820-1903] had a huge impact on late 19th and early 20th century thought. His *System of synthetic philosophy*, published between 1862 and 1893, is an evolutionist system advocating a laissez-faire social philosophy. Its notorious mixing of biological and social notions was profoundly influential.

Darwin's great work of 1859, *On the origin of species by means of natural selection*, is rightly seen as a landmark in the history of science, but, in terms of intellectual influence at the time, Darwin was less significant than others, such as Spencer. Because Darwin's theory has been scientifically vindicated and forms a core part of current evolutionary theory, there is a tendency for us perhaps to overestimate its significance for late 19th and early 20th century thinkers. The publication of Darwin's work obviously added impetus to the evolutionary ideas that were in the air at the time, but the actual content of those ideas (which generally had a teleological element) owed nothing to Darwin, the thrust of whose thought was anti-teleological and, consequently, counter-intuitive.

Rougier conformed to the 19th century pattern which confused notions of biological and social evolution.⁴ Indeed, one suspects at times that he is being deliberately vague in some of his

remarks on race, culture and evolution, perhaps to avoid insisting too explicitly on the link between biology and culture.

In his major early work, *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a), Rougier scarcely alludes to Darwin or to evolution, though, as noted above, the tradition within which Rougier is located has deep evolutionary assumptions. The notion of more or less primitive cultures was a commonplace – associated sometimes with a belief in the biological inferiority of ‘savages’. Rougier does not emphasise biological differences so much as cultural differences (‘mentalités’), though stray comments do suggest that he believed in the biological superiority of Europeans.

The first significant reference to evolutionary theory in Rougier’s oeuvre would appear to be in his article, ‘Les rapports de la science et de la religion’ (1930). Rougier shows himself to be skeptical of the details of evolutionary science. He refers, for example, to the precariousness of the results of paleontology. Nevertheless, he clearly accepts that humans evolved from lower animals and have endured a slow and difficult ascent (Rougier 1930, p. 274). He believes the evidence from paleontology and studies in prehistory point to polyphylogenesis – that is, that different human groups developed from different animal lines. For instance, it is impossible to put on the same lineage Neanderthal man and Cro-Magnon man (the latter being an example of *Homo sapiens*, the former not). What Rougier means exactly by a separate line is not entirely clear. But it is clear that his attraction to the notion of polyphylogenesis is not unrelated to his abiding theme of cultural diversity, pluralism of lineage paralleling pluralism of mentalities; and furthermore that his position could well have been inspired by a desire to maintain a special biological status for Europeans, the proud descendants of Cro-Magnon man.

Rougier’s friend and associate Ludwig von Mises referred in his *Theory and history* (1958) to the controversy about the monogenetic or polygenetic origin of *Homo sapiens*. His comments throw some light on Rougier’s perspective. Though he claims not to take sides in this debate, Mises, like Rougier, clearly wants to insist on deep differences between human groups.

There is no need to raise the question here whether the transformation of subhuman primates into the species *Homo sapiens* occurred only once at a definite time and in a definite part of the earth’s surface or came to pass several times and resulted in the emergence of various original races. Neither does the establishment of this fact mean that there is such a thing as unity of civilization. (Mises 1958, pp. 219-220)

He reiterates the point later in the book:

Even if we assume that all men are the descendants of one group of primates, which alone evolved into the human species, we have to take account of the fact that at a very early date dispersion over the surface of the earth broke up this original unity into more or less isolated parts. (Mises 1958, p. 368)

Mises' interests, like Rougier's, are primarily cultural, but he insists on an association between culture and biology. Though he avoids discussing the biology of race explicitly, his views are clear enough.

All that can be said about racial issues on the ground of historical experience boils down to two statements. First, the prevailing differences between the various biological strains of men are reflected in the civilizatory achievements of the group members. Second, in our age the main achievements in civilization of some subdivisions of the white Caucasian race are viewed by the immense majority of the members of all other races as more desirable than characteristic features of the civilization produced by the members of their respective own races. (Mises 1958, pp. 336-337)

Rougier also seems to imply that there is a link between biology and culture.

Among the different families of primates which began some 500,000 years ago to differentiate themselves from one another, some never developed beyond savagery or barbarism. Still others, passing through the Copper, Bronze and Iron ages, succeeded in evolving higher types of cultures and more complex social organizations. Human geography provides us with a picture of all these levels of civilization. Only a few racial groups passed the threshold of the scientific and industrial revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (Rougier 1971, p. 192)

In his last book, Rougier, showing perhaps a little more awareness of the sensitivity of the topic of race and racial differences, reasserts his views on cultural differences:

En laissant de côté la question controversée de savoir s'il existe différentes races, le mot race était devenu tabou depuis l'hitlérisme et le problème étant purement verbal, il faut reconnaître que les traditions, sorte de "préjugés historiques" selon Taine, sont

pour les peuples l'équivalent du patrimoine héréditaire pour les individus. (Rougier 1979a, p. 195)

[Leaving aside the controversial question of whether or not there are different races – the word 'race' having become taboo since Hitlerism, and the problem being anyway a purely verbal one – one must recognize that traditions (which Taine saw as 'historical prejudices') are for peoples the equivalent of genetic inheritance for individuals.]

Whilst not explicitly stating that the shape or pattern of a given culture is to some degree a product of the population's genetic inheritance, Rougier certainly does seem to imply some such view, juxtaposing as he does comments on cultural traditions with comments on genetic differences between various human populations (Rougier 1979a, pp. 195 ff.).⁵

Given that such general views on racial differences were commonplace in the world Rougier grew up in – and remained common until well into the 20th century – it is impossible to identify decisively the crucial sources for Rougier's judgements concerning differential human cultural evolution. But both Taine and Renan⁶ must come high on the list. Significantly, Rougier alluded to Taine – whose unequivocal views on race were noted in Chapter 8 – in his discussion of race in his last book (see above quotation). In the same discussion he also cited Renan, alluding to his remark that different peoples occupy different ranks in the prize-list ('le palmarès') of humanity (Rougier 1979, p. 196).

Surprisingly, perhaps, even Henri Poincaré, Rougier's other great intellectual mentor, expressed views on cultural evolution and appealed in so doing to the theory of evolution and to natural selection. In *Science and method*, he suggests that, as different peoples pursued their different ideals 'without reference to consequences', the 'play of evolution and natural selection' ensured that those whose ideal conformed to their highest purpose came to dominate those whose ideal did not.

If the Greeks triumphed over the barbarians and if Europe, heir of Greek thought, dominates the world, it is because the savages loved loud colors and the clamorous tones of the drum which occupied only their senses, while the Greeks loved the intellectual beauty which hides beneath sensuous beauty, and this intellectual beauty it is which makes intelligence sure and strong. (Poincaré 1946, p. 368)

One cannot fail to see in this passage some favorite themes of Rougier's, most notably the notion of a distinction between sense and spirit which was a feature of the idealism which influenced his thought on cultural topics. Rougier's reference to the spiritual or intellectual nature of the French language comes particularly to mind, with his view of France as inheritor *par excellence* of the spirit of classical Greece. The Indo-European or Aryan ideal, which clearly lies behind such views, is all too easily assimilated to notions of differential human biological evolution.

The use of the Aryan ideal by the Nazis raises the question of links between their thought and Rougier's, and also the question of anti-Semitism. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler presented the whole history of mankind as a conflict between Aryan idealism and Jewish materialism. In praising the Aryan as the sole creator of cultures, he invoked the Promethean myth:

All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. This very fact admits of the not unfounded inference that he alone was the founder of all higher humanity [...] He is the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times, forever kindling anew that fire of knowledge which illumined the night of silent mysteries and thus caused man to climb the path to mastery over the other beings of the earth. (Hitler 1943, p. 290)

By contrast, the Jewish race is presented as essentially parasitic and not culture-creating (Hitler 1943, pp. 300 ff.). Jews have created no original styles of art or culture (Hitler 1943, p. 303). The Jew 'lacks idealism in any form' and stands for 'naked egoism' (Hitler 1943, pp. 306, 302).

It is clear that Hitler was drawing on the same 19th century tradition as Rougier, a tradition which mixed notions of biological, social and spiritual evolution with the Aryan myth, and which depicted Jews in a negative light. For – as we have already noted – Rougier also placed great emphasis on the culture-creating powers of qualitative civilizations, and, in some of his writings, contrasted the more spiritual outlook of classical and Catholic Europe with Jewish materialism. But Rougier's relatively mild and restrained remarks can in no way be compared to Hitler's irrational and obsessional ravings. Moreover, as the Nazi threat became more evident, Rougier was quick to identify its seriousness and to condemn all that Hitler represented.

There are suggestions of anti-Semitism in a 1928 essay to which reference has already been made. The essay elaborates, as has been noted, Weberian themes concerning the origins of capitalism in Calvinism. Rougier has grave reservations about the values of capitalism, and tends to be unsympathetic to Protestantism which he identifies with fanaticism and a rejection of the aristocratic and civilizing values of antiquity. But this essay includes unflattering references not only to Protestantism, but also to Jewish culture. Linking Protestantism with the Jewish spirit, Rougier claims that it was the Reformation that universalized the Jewish spirit. Both Jews and puritans participated in – and indeed precipitated – a radical rejection of the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual, which the Catholic tradition had, of course, maintained (Rougier 1928, p. 913). Rougier refers to the absolute failure of the Jewish tradition to appreciate the different orders of which Pascal speaks. Against the “spiritual” tradition of Plato, the Stoics, Catholicism and Kant, stands Jewish materialism:

Nul peuple plus que les Juifs n'a contribué à proclamer le primat du gain matériel sur toutes les autres fins humaines; aucun n'a plus contribué à répandre cette mentalité que tout peut s'évaluer en argent et s'acheter, même les biens impondérables. (Rougier 1928, pp. 912-913).

[The Jews more than any other people have promoted the idea of the primacy of material success over all other human goals; have propagated the notion that everything can be evaluated in financial terms and purchased – even non-material goods.]

Rougier does not, however, fail to see the social benefits which the application of Jewish messianism to social and economic life – this attempt to bring about an equitable world – has brought. Contemporary civilization has realized – and on a large scale – a higher level of social justice and wellbeing than any other civilization (Rougier 1928, p. 917). Predictably, however, the essay closes with a bitter attack on the soullessness and ugliness of modern commercialism, and a reaffirmation, in the manner of Ferrero, of the superior value of classical and Renaissance civilizations (Rougier 1928, p. 921).

But, though he clearly had absorbed elements of the Aryan myth, Rougier also wrote, as we have noted, some impeccably liberal analytical and polemical pieces attacking Hitlerism and racism. Most notable amongst these works would be *Les mystiques politiques contemporaines et leurs incidences internationales* (1935) and *Créance morale de la France* (1946). Both books are suffused with the values of classical liberalism. The former – discussed in Chapter 10 – is a model of measured analysis and evidence of Rougier's prescience in social and political

matters. The latter (which was in fact first published in Canada in 1945) is a work of contemporary history, polemic and analysis written for a general audience. Though marred in parts by patriotic rhetoric (understandable in the circumstances), it manages also effectively to uphold the values of liberalism. Seeing France more as a symbol of universal values than a political entity, Rougier avoids the narrowness and parochialism often associated with a patriotic outlook.

One chapter in particular is interesting. It comprises a dispassionate history and analysis of German racial consciousness. According to Rougier, all the key themes of German racist messianism are evident in the early 19th century in the work of Fichte (1946, p. 235). These themes are specified as follows: the ethnographic fallacy which portrays the German people as racially pure, ignoring the effects of wars and migrations; the linguistic fallacy which portrays the German language as 'une langue originelle'; the messianism which promises to the world a *pax germanica*; Machiavellianism and militarism as means of execution; and even anti-semitism, as Fichte would refuse the right of citizenship to Jews because of their supposed racial impurity (Rougier 1946, p. 237).

The last section of this chapter is a powerful denunciation of these doctrines. Rougier quotes extensively from Renan's famous letter to David Strauss (written in 1870) in which the notion of racial purity is ridiculed as a dangerous chimera (1946, pp. 246-247). Earlier Rougier had argued that Hitler had waged a new kind of war – not a national war but a 'zoological war' based on racist ideology and economic nationalism, a total war not merely between armies but between peoples (1946, pp. 232-233). This notion of the 'guerre zoologique', is due to Renan. It is a disturbing fact, and testimony to the continuing relevance of the social thought of Renan and Rougier, that many late 20th century and current conflicts may be so categorized.

Rougier clearly believes, not unreasonably, that genetic inheritance is a major factor in determining differences between individuals. He is, perhaps, more inclined to focus on differences than those committed to egalitarian ideals, but this is an attitudinal issue rather than a substantive one. More controversially, he suggests that genetic inheritance is not irrelevant to cultural differences between peoples, and to relative achievements in the realm of human culture.

Such suggestions, coupled with his lifelong interest in eugenics, may tempt some to categorize Rougier with Nazi theorists, but this would be a serious misrepresentation of his position, I believe. The progressive, liberal and anti-totalitarian elements in his social thought cannot be denied. Any attempt – in the manner, for example, of Gilles Bounoure – to ignore them, or to present them as some kind of cynical smokescreen, would clearly represent an unjustified distortion of the evidence.

Though Rougier's social philosophy is indeed marked by traces of racial thinking, reflecting outmoded and discredited views, it is not thereby invalidated *in toto*. For Rougier's main concern is not with race *per se* – which he recognizes as being a concept fraught with confusion – but rather with cultural traditions and achievements. His fundamental purpose is to celebrate (and indeed to help to perpetuate) the moral and intellectual achievements of three thousand years of European culture.

¹ Significantly, Babeuf was one of Rougier's chief targets in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*.

² See references in *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a) and in *La métaphysique et le langage* (1960).

³ Of course, by the late 19th century the 'noblest part' of mankind was no longer automatically associated with the hereditary nobility. Social changes and a less traditional, more scientific outlook encouraged more pragmatic views, and even aristocrats like Pareto saw elites as fluid and changing. We have previously noted that Rougier draws on Pareto's ideas. He does so, for example, in the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (1920a, p. 50) where he refers in passing to the circulation of elites. Though he makes no reference here to his source, elsewhere in the book (1920a, p. 461) he refers to *Le traité de sociologie générale*. It is clear that in this respect Rougier's views parallel Pareto's: the elite is potentially open to all (Rougier 1920a, p. 53).

⁴ It should be noted that recent work in the area of complex adaptive systems has given new life to Spencerian notions. Robert Wright (2000) argues on the basis of this work that similar principles apply both to biological evolution and to the evolution of human culture and society, and that both processes tend towards greater complexity. A leading figure in the field, J. Doyne Farmer, has explicitly referred to Spencer's ideas as prefiguring his own in certain respects (Brockman 1975, pp. 367-368). Farmer states: 'The progression from disorder to organization will proceed in fits and starts, as it does in natural evolution, and it may even reverse itself from time to time [...] But in an adaptive complex system, the overall tendency will be towards self-organization' (Brockman 1995, p. 368). (Clearly, Farmer's ideas on progress have much in common also with those of Renan.)

⁵ Rougier says, quite rightly, that isolated populations develop specific anatomical, physiological, immunological etc. characteristics that can be scientifically delineated; but then, echoing his early endorsement of the "polyphylogenesis" hypothesis, proceeds to exaggerate the differences between Asiatic, African, Amerindian and Western populations. The subsequent discussion of the pecking orders identified by studies in ethology seems out of place, as the studies in question would appear to relate to inequalities within – rather than between – populations.

⁶ Renan's views on race – which were alluded to in Chapter 3 – are spelled out in the final pages of his *Histoires des langues sémitiques* in which he emphasizes what he sees as the profound differences between races (Renan 1958, pp. 580-589). In his analysis of the various ethnic groupings, Renan clearly sees the Indo-Europeans as preeminent, largely on account of their transcendent faculties, their capacity to access the ideal world ('monde idéal') (1958, p. 589).

Chapter 14

A political man

The tensions, complexities and apparent inconsistencies in Rougier's thinking may be seen to be reflected in the strange mix of his social and intellectual affiliations, taking us beyond the work, to the man. What sort of man was Rougier? Are these apparent inconsistencies or surprising alliances signs of opportunism, indications of a fatal lack of intellectual seriousness or sincerity?

It must be conceded that, on the face of it, some of Rougier's affiliations may be seen as somewhat puzzling. His ambivalent and ambiguous attitude to Christianity and the Catholic Church and to religion in general has been discussed in previous chapters. In the realm of philosophy, there is his association with the Vienna Circle, in spite of his clear rejection of some of its core tenets. And in the politico-economic realm, his institutional links reflect the fact that he appears to have wavered between the (incompatible) positions of moderate liberal conservatism and radical (or extreme) conservatism.

With respect to his links with the Vienna Circle, I don't believe there is a problem. He may well have desired to be involved with this important movement, but there is no indication that Rougier's intellectual honesty and independence were in any way compromised by his association with the group. On the one hand, his epistemology certainly had much in common with the views of the Circle, enough to justify his leading role in organizing the 1935 Paris Congress. And, on the other, he was forthright in his criticisms of certain tenets which certain influential members of the group sought to promote (most notably the notion of the unity of science).¹ In an article on the conference, he makes an unexceptionable point about the dangers of dogmatism:

Si, par l'importance de ses thèses, l'Ecole de Vienne méritait d'être prise comme base des discussions du premier Congrès de Philosophie scientifique, le Comité d'organisation ne voulut pas, pour autant, professer un catéchisme, imposer une dogmatique, édifier une scolastique. (Rougier 1936, p. 193)

[If, by the importance of its theses, the School of Vienna was judged as deserving to be taken as the basis for the discussions of the first Congress of Scientific Philosophy, the

organizing committee did not thereby wish to profess a catechism, to impose a set of dogmas, to build a new scholasticism.]

Rougier was one of the original members of the organizational committee for the Encyclopedia², and was to write a monograph for that publication. But, according to George Reisch, Rougier – like Hans Reichenbach – ultimately refused to participate in the Encyclopedia project because of Neurath's doctrinaire attitude. He fell out with Neurath (who believed passionately in the unity of science) after arguing about

... arrangements and publicity for the 1937 International Congress for the Unity of Science and over Rougier's projected monograph, "From Rationalism A Priori to Empiricism." Flatly rejecting Neurath's suggestions for how this topic ought to be approached, Rougier charged that the Encyclopedia was Neurath's "personal project" and therefore not as democratic and collaborative as it could be. (Reisch 1997, n. 19)

Any suggestion of a serious tendency to opportunism or dishonesty in Rougier's dealings with the Vienna Circle would appear to be put to rest by this account, which indicates that he had the courage of his convictions, even if it meant being excluded from participating in a prestigious international project. One suspects that the death in 1936 of Moritz Schlick, the charming, cultured and decidedly undogmatic leader of the Circle (to whose memory Rougier dedicated his *Traité de la connaissance* (1955)) may have hastened the parting of ways.

Rougier's political affiliations are, perhaps, of more concern. I have noted that, directly after World War II, Rougier was very disappointed not to be invited to join the likes of Lionel Robbins and Friedrich Hayek at the meeting which led to the formation of the Mont Pèlerin Society. His subsequent links with right wing groups which have been characterized as radical or extreme does raise some troubling questions. Could his association with the radical right in France be seen as having been precipitated by this rejection by the moderate, mainstream right? Did his institutional and intellectual marginalization lead to a shift in his political views? Or had he always been something of an extreme conservative, concealing his actual views through the 1930s and 1940s as he sought to consolidate his position at the heart of the increasingly important neo-liberal movement? Could it be that Rougier was not, after all, a serious thinker but rather the sophist that Bounoure describes, a clever but superficial opportunist, a frustrated careerist?

I do not pretend to provide definitive answers to such questions, but three points may be made. Firstly, I believe that my presentation of his social thought in previous chapters provides convincing evidence of Rougier's fundamental belief in the core values of liberalism (such as personal liberty). The writings speak for themselves and the presence of regularly recurring themes and commitments is evidence that Rougier's views, while not necessarily internally consistent, maintained a high degree of continuity.

Secondly, a lack of internal consistency in a thinker confronting the immensely complex problems of the human world should not be condemned out of hand. Consistency could well be a far more ominous sign.³

My third point arises from a comment by that great respecter of obscure and inconsistent thinkers, Isaiah Berlin. In an essay, he makes the point that the notion of sincerity – an ideal which lies behind the questions raised above – is a virtue of recent invention. He writes:

Integrity and sincerity were not among the attributes which were admired – indeed, they were scarcely mentioned – in the ancient or medieval worlds, which prized objective truth, getting things right, however accomplished. (Berlin 1997, p. 333)

Rougier, of course, was very much attuned to classical values. Discussing Roman religious tolerance, Rougier notes (1977, p. 8) that Cicero was a member of the College of Augurs despite having argued (in *De divinatione*) against the reality of divination: he recognized the necessity of maintaining traditional institutions to avoid perturbing popular beliefs. Rougier's (approving) reference to Cicero's apparently inconsistent affiliations is clear evidence that he was somewhat closer to the classical scale of values in this area than to today's notions, and provides an interesting insight into his own perspective on his affiliations and commitments.

Further evidence is provided in his Ferrero memoir (discussed in Chapter 9). He clearly prided himself on his ability to get things done by wily schemes and stratagems.

Given his self-image and his values, it is no surprise that Rougier offered his services to the Vichy regime. Though a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the secret mission to London is beyond the scope of this work – and would probably do little to illuminate Rougier's thought – it is impossible entirely to ignore the mission for which, more than any other action or achievement, Rougier is known and judged.

I wish simply to make the point that, at least on the face of it, the notorious secret mission, agreed to by Churchill, and designed to promote covert links between Pétain and the British government, was well motivated. Rougier claimed that an agreement (incorporating assurances concerning the French fleet and the colonies) was reached in October 1940 which was designed to allow Vichy to cooperate in the allied war effort.⁴

Churchill's brief reference to the mission in his history of World War II confirms elements of Rougier's account. (There were major disagreements between Rougier and the British Foreign Office (and between Rougier and Churchill) which first came to public notice in the spring of 1945, but to address these would require more extensive treatment than is possible here.⁵) On August 7, 1940, Churchill signed a military agreement with de Gaulle, but he recognized the desirability of maintaining links with Vichy.

[I]t was necessary to keep in touch, not only with France, but even with Vichy.
(Churchill 1949, p. 450)

He wished to promote a measure of cooperation.

It was in this spirit that I was to receive in October a certain M. Rougier, who represented himself as acting on the personal instructions of Marshal Pétain. This was not because I or my colleagues had any respect for Marshal Pétain, but only because no road that led to France should be incontinently barred. (Churchill 1949, p. 450)

Evidence that Rougier was not locked into unequivocal support for the Vichy régime, but was an independent (and well-intentioned) player, might arguably be found in his cooperation (in New York, in the spring of 1941) with the French politician Camille Chautemps, Fred Hoffherr of France Forever, and Jean de Sieyès, the brother of de Gaulle's personal representative, in exploring, in the words of Colin Nettelbeck, 'the possibilities of a middle way, between the Pétain and the de Gaulle positions, in the hope that it might provide a wider base of agreement' (Nettelbeck 1991, p. 55).⁶

Despite the nature of his involvement, Rougier's association with the Vichy régime in 1940 led to disastrous consequences for his career and reputation. Though he spent most of the war in New York, it was on account of his Vichy connections that he was stripped of his university post after the war, and prevented from returning to academic life for a decade.

Reputable texts and reference works continue to highlight the Vichy link. A short entry in a recent dictionary of philosophers alludes to the 'obscure and somewhat dubious part' he played 'as an emissary from Pétain to Churchill' (Quinton 1998, p. 678). In a work on the 'Hussards', Nicholas Hewitt includes an unflattering reference to Rougier, based on his association with Constant Bourquin's Editions du Cheval Ailé (which published a few of his books after the War). Bourquin, writes Hewitt, 'specialised in the publication of self-justificatory memoirs by ex-Vichy officials and politicians such as Henri Du Moulin de Labarthète, René Gillouin, Louis Rougier and René Benjamin as well as books by right-wing theorists like Henri de Man, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Alfred Fabre-Luce, Pierre Dominique and André Thérive' (Hewitt 1996, p. 77). At least Rougier might have been granted the status of theorist, rather than being characterized merely as an ex-Vichy official!

Rougier's association with the European New Right from the 1960s (discussed in Chapter 12) will be seen by many to confirm Rougier's dubious political status. Furthermore, some will feel that his obvious pleasure in being a sort of guru for a group of much younger people is a sign of weakness in his character.

Rougier does not seek to disguise the gratification which his role within the movement brought him:

La plus grande joie [...] c'est de savoir qu'on laisse des disciples. (Allais 1990, p. 51)

[Knowing that one leaves disciples is a source of the greatest pleasure.]

Some – especially those who favor the ideal (more honored perhaps in English-speaking countries than in France) of intellectual detachment – may feel uneasy about such sentiments. They are, however, whatever judgement one may be inclined to make, fairly easily explained.

Rougier had a nature which was both combative and intellectually gregarious. His ostracism after World War II and his failure to achieve academic recognition (both due, as he saw it, to ideological factors) had a profound effect on him, fueling his bitterness, and pushing him to the political margins where, as an old man, he found pleasure in playing the master to a group of young people. His links with GRECE and related organizations served to give the work of his last years a focus and a social and intellectual context.

However one interprets Rougier's political commitments during these years, the body of his work stands as a testament to intellectual freedom, and its complexities, far from indicating a lack of intellectual seriousness or constancy, witness rather, I think, to a sustained commitment to intellectual values.

An article of Rougier's, published in 1948, serves to draw a number of these themes together. It is, in effect, a plea for the acceptance of complexity in matters relating to the social world and, as such, may be seen to represent a dimension of Rougier's intellectualism.

The article operates on a number of levels: psychological, logical, polemical, even personal. (Personal, as the issues Rougier is discussing are closely related to his personal circumstances at the time.) The piece has a certain poignancy, as it is written by a thinker at the height of his powers, and yet at a point in his career when all seems finished: he has been stripped of his position and barred from the university system for political reasons.

The article, entitled 'La logique de l'alternative et l'avènement des tyrannies', explores the human tendency to condemn without good cause. Though it could be seen as self-justificatory (to use Hewitt's term), it manages to touch on some important human truths. Arguably, it shows Rougier at his best, not as philosopher, but as a keen and engaged observer of the social and political scene – and of human nature.

The piece opens with a brief discussion of the role of machines in the modern world, specifically in American education, and a suggestion that they are contributing to a trend to devalue human reason and the capacity for careful analysis. This is just the hook, however. Rougier is not concerned here with the impact of machines, but rather with the dangerous consequences of an innate human flaw: the tendency to resort to the most simple of intellectual operations, the logic of the alternative, and to neglect the higher logics which deal with possibilities and probabilities, necessity and conditional judgements.

Cette simplification du cerveau humain est à la base des passions politiques de l'heure présente. Sur toutes les questions humaines où devrait intervenir l'infini graduation des nuances, on ramène tous les jugements de valeur à la logique de l'alternative. On divise arbitrairement les peuples, les partis, les individus en deux classes: celles des bons et des élus, celle des indignes et des réprouvés, qui s'appellent respectivement les

démocrates et les fascistes, les résistants et les collaborationnistes. Dans ce lit de Procruste, on réussit à faire rentrer par force la prodigieuse variété des régimes constitutionnels, des attitudes politiques, des opinions individuelles. (Rougier 1948, p. 74)

[This simplifying tendency of the human brain is at the root of the political passions currently evident. On all human questions, to which an infinite gradation of nuances should be applied, the logic of the alternative is reverted to whenever a value judgement is at issue. Peoples, parties and individuals are arbitrarily divided into two classes: the good, or the elect, and the unworthy, the condemned. Those in the first class are known as democrats or members of the resistance, those in the second as fascists or collaborators. Into this Procrustean bed are forced the prodigious variety of constitutional regimes, political views and individual opinions.]

That Rougier was suffering from this tendency in others does not lessen the impact of a very powerful piece of writing. Revealing in what it tells us about Rougier's actual political judgements, it is also a very characteristic piece in terms of its mixing of references to such technical matters as conditional and modal logics with broader social and political issues. In the introduction to his first major work, *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, he was doing a very similar thing in highlighting the deep and dangerous implications for politics of classical metaphysics.

The specific political judgements and sympathies evident in 'La logique de l'alternative' will alienate many: but perhaps this just confirms Rougier's point, that we are ever too ready to judge according to the logic of the alternative instead of trying to understand complex (human and political) reality.

According to Rougier, during the course of World War II, the terms 'fascist' and 'democrat' lost all substantial content, and came simply to mean 'allied to the German Reich and Japan', or 'allied to the United States and Great Britain' respectively (1948, p. 76). He notes the dramatic changes in the allied view of Russia, the prototype, as Rougier puts it, of totalitarian states. When Russia was attacked and changed sides, suddenly innocent Finland was promoted to the ranks of aggressor countries and Stalin became (in Roosevelt's words) 'the greatest democrat in the world' (Rougier 1948, p. 77). An American priest, on his return from an official visit to Russia, announced that religious freedom was respected throughout Russia. The New York

Times published an editorial – entitled ‘Russia’s new capitalism’ – claiming Russia had repudiated Marxist-Leninist economics.

Rougier argues that Spain was treated very badly by the Allies after the war despite having done much to help the Allied cause. Franco’s government was labeled fascist and excluded from the United Nations. Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Enver Hodza’s Albania, Tito’s Yugoslavia, and, above all, Stalin’s USSR were deemed to be less totalitarian than Catholic and traditionalist Spain (Rougier 1948, p. 78).

Rougier closes the piece by insisting that seeing the alliance of Britain and the US with Russia as anything more than a temporary and pragmatic grouping of powers against Germany’s monstrous attempt to achieve European hegemony would definitively compromise the result of the war.

Que si l’on cédait à la logique de l’alternative qui veut ranger du même côté le socialisme dictatorial et la démocratie libérale sous prétexte qu’ils s’opposent, le premier à droite, la seconde à gauche, au fascisme bourgeois; si, au nom de cette alternative, on continuait à baptiser la Russie soviétique de démocratie, on ne rendrait pas pour cela la Russie plus démocratique, mais on détériorerait sûrement l’idée de la démocratie chez les peuples épris de liberté. (Rougier 1948, p. 81)

[If one yielded to the logic of the alternative, declaring dictatorial socialism and liberal democracy to be on the same side under the pretext that they are both opposed – albeit from different perspectives – to bourgeois fascism; if, in the name of this dichotomy, one continued to call Soviet Russia a democracy, one would not thus render Russia more democratic – but one would definitely degrade the notion of democracy for all those who believe in freedom.]

Well-intentioned people may well come to believe in the possibility of reconciling economic socialism with political democracy, but such a notion, if it gained ground, would have disastrous consequences for democracy.

Rougier, while working still within the framework of his general thesis concerning the dangers of reducing complex issues to simple oppositions, clearly goes beyond the internal logic of his argument. In fact, he is appealing to that key tenet of neo-liberalism, the indivisibility of liberty. Such beliefs are not defended here but are, as it were, grafted on to the explicit intellectual

framework of the article. Such is the polemical method, and this article, for all its insights, is more polemic than philosophy or social science.

As we have seen, Rougier's works often incorporate an openly polemical element. Sometimes, as here, it is dominant; at other times, such as in his more scholarly articles, it appears to be absent, or at least subordinated to other, more objective, concerns. But the ideological component is never totally absent, I think, because this is what drove Rougier to think and to write. It lurks, as it were, beneath the surface of even the driest of his works.

Rougier was an intensely and consistently political man. He believed in, and exemplified, the ideal of intelligence formed by character. His fundamental values and social views are closely tied to interpretations of the cultural history of the West, and he does not aspire to provide a systematic justification or metaphysical foundation for his views.

Many of the classical problems of metaphysics are, for him, pseudo-problems which will disappear in due course with the advance of science. The course of such problems may be traced and understood historically. Other metaphysical problems are – and will remain – mysteries. There is, according to Rougier, no distinctively philosophical method, no royal road to truth. In a sense, the philosopher did not really believe in philosophy, at least not in philosophy as an independent intellectual discipline. Philosophical ethics did not interest him. For Rougier, science (broadly defined to include history) was the only way to knowledge, though its ambit was limited. Science cannot transcend itself. And aspects of the realm of human life and value remain beyond its scope.

It is no surprise, then, that Rougier resisted the entreaties of his friend Maurice Allais to write a book summarizing his conception of the world (Allais 1990, p. 39). This was not his way.

Perhaps the present work has helped to bring Rougier's thought into some sort of focus, or at least to present some of his main themes clearly and in context. For his thought can only be understood within the context of the various intellectual traditions which he appropriated, or of which he was a part. If an individual's 'position' is always defined in terms of his or her participation in a tradition, in terms of relationships with other thinkers, some thinkers – and Rougier is one – are more dependent on that matrix of thought than others. Arguably, it is just

this receptiveness to various, disparate and even incompatible traditions which gives Rougier's work, especially his writings on social themes, its power and value.

Rougier's social thinking certainly incorporated some elements of the skeptical, pragmatic Anglo-American liberal conservative tradition. Not only was he opposed to the radical and violent changes implied by revolutionary ideology, his qualified belief in progress prevented him – despite powerful conservative instincts – from sliding into a reactionary position. His liberalism has, as has been noted, much in common with Popper's. Progress is not inevitable. It is a long and difficult process fraught with dangers. Implicitly, in, for example, his references to cautionary tales such as Huxley's *Brave new world* and Orwell's *1984*, as well as in his oblique comments on religion in later works such as *Du paradis à l'utopie* (1979), Rougier defended the notion of the importance of spiritual privacy. His lifelong commitment to the individual and his rejection of the metaphysical notion of group consciousness, as well as the absence of any explicit theological or metaphysical underpinning for his social philosophy, are further evidence of his relative closeness to mainstream liberal conservatism. In fact, O'Sullivan (1976, p. 139) mentions Rougier (with other European neo-liberals), not as a radical conservative but as a liberal-conservative sympathetic to the ideas of the Anglo-American New Right.

Rougier was, however, also very much a product of the European tradition of social politics. I have highlighted ways in which the European neo-liberal tradition, of which Rougier was very much a part, differed from Anglo-American neo-liberalism, and was committed to certain European cultural ideals. His later role as ideologue of the New Right in France took him further in the direction of 'social politics'.

Rougier identified with, and sought his values in, the great religious and intellectual traditions which form the basis of Western civilization. He identified particularly with the classical Greek view of life, which he interpreted in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Greece was the cradle of science, and of a proud and basically optimistic culture. It was, I think, the prospect of human progress which, in the end, made life worthwhile for him, but his view of progress was not a simple or a superficial one. He found intrinsic value in intellectual striving, and warned about the disastrous consequences of a society losing its taste for knowledge and research. The early Christians had rejected Greek intellectualism and sought comfort in an anti-intellectual mystical ideal. With other (more celebrated) writers like Aldous Huxley and H.G. Wells, Rougier had discerned early in the 20th century that contemporary Western society was, likewise, losing the 'anxiety of thought', seeking its comfort and salvation, not in a spiritual ideal this time, but rather in a material one, a material religion, in the outlook we now call consumerism.

Rougier's historical importance is due in part to the accidents of his early education and to his longevity. His early solitary reading focused on authors, like Taine and Renan, who had been highly influential in France with respect to the generation previous to his own. Rougier's perspective, henceforth, would be out of step with French academic culture, though quite in line with some foreign trends, such as European neo-liberalism and logical empiricism.

Arguably, his greatest contribution to the development of Western thought and society relates to his early participation in European neo-liberalism – a movement which helped to create the economic and political structure within which the developed world currently operates. His 1935 book on contemporary political mystiques is a miniature masterpiece of liberal social thought: lucid, restrained and chillingly prescient.

In France, he was a unique bridge-figure between the late 19th and late 20th centuries. Not only did he live well into his tenth decade, but he was active almost until the end and involved with much younger people, notably with the leaders of GRECE who were more than fifty years younger than himself. His cooperation with the Nouvelle Droite, which seems on the face of it quite incompatible with his previously expressed liberal views, may be explicable in terms of deeply felt beliefs and convictions which were always a part of his intellectual outlook. These beliefs and convictions included views on culture and race which were characteristic of the intellectual milieu in which he grew up, but which today are generally seen – quite rightly – as outmoded and untenable.

Rougier was a passionate and complex thinker, engaged with the issues and events of a tumultuous and fascinating period. His mind was formed in one of the most exciting epochs in the history of Western thought, and his belief in science and progress reflects this fact. He also lived through the last days of the old Europe, and the cultural, intellectual and political convulsions of the 20th century.

Rougier's writings, however, never reached a wide audience. His books are not the kind that academics are likely to incorporate into student reading lists. Nonetheless, their themes remain topical, and many of his arguments and judgements have stood the test of time rather better than those of his more celebrated contemporaries.

Louis Rougier is worth the attention even of those who find his views unpalatable. The story – only touched on in the present work – of his ostracism and neglect by the academic mainstream

is salutary, and raises important questions about the way the history of ideas is written, especially concerning the role of ideology in determining which figures are deemed worthy of attention and which are not.

For intellectual history is not just about the big names, many of whom – it must be admitted – achieved their fame by distinguishing themselves from their contemporaries through the adoption of spectacularly wrongheaded notions. It is – or should be – much more concerned with the background pattern, the too-often unnoticed matrix of beliefs and assumptions that underlies all thought. Arguably, this pattern is often most delicately etched in the minds, and most clearly evident in the works, of so-called minor thinkers, so long as they are, as Rougier most certainly was, alive to the currents of their time.

¹ See, for example, Rougier (1936, pp. 191 ff.). (These issues were discussed in Chapter 6.)

² The others were Neurath, Carnap, Frank, Charles Morris and Jørgen Jørgenson (Cartwright et al. 1996, p. 84).

³ The contrast between Rougier's sometimes awkward mix of Christian and classical ideals and Alain de Benoist's arguably more consistent social views (based on neo-pagan ideals) comes to mind.

⁴ Rougier's memoir of the secret mission appeared in several editions, the first (entitled *Les accords Pétain-Churchill: histoire d'une mission secrète*) being published in Canada in 1945. Jeffrey Mehlman's narrative (2000, pp. 123 ff.) generally follows Rougier's account.

⁵ Again, Mehlman (2000, pp. 135 ff.) gives an account sympathetic to Rougier. Robert Frank (1992) offers a less sympathetic perspective, emphasizing, like Bounoure, Rougier's putatively self-serving rhetorical strategies. He admits that Rougier succeeded in stimulating negotiations between Britain and Vichy, but claims he exaggerated his achievements and, in fact, lied. He writes (Frank 1992, p. 146): 'La difficulté avec Rougier, c'est qu'il mêle avec grand art le vrai et le faux, la sincérité et la supercherie, la bonne foi et l'escroquerie.'

⁶ The fact that the French émigré community was riven by bitter divisions and political intrigue makes it impossible to draw any firm conclusions from Rougier's New York manoeuvrings, but another possible – and perhaps clearer – sign of his seriousness and good faith at this point in his life is his continuing concern for the food situation in France, a concern he shared with Simone Weil. According to Jeffrey Mehlman, 'what set Simone Weil and Louis Rougier apart in the French colony of wartime New York was the utter seriousness with which they took the rampant hunger in metropolitan France' (2000, p. 118). Whereas Weil died (in England) as a result of her refusal to eat 'lest she ingest sinfully more than the millions of French living on rations' at home, Rougier 'pursued a single journalistic obsession: the hunger induced by the Allied blockade of France was wreaking a demographic catastrophe that would ultimately be of greater consequence than any political victory the Allies might achieve' (Mehlman 2000, pp. 118, 119). (It was Rougier who was called upon – by André Weil, Simone's brother – to break the news of Simone's final illness to her parents (Pétrément 1976, p. 539).)

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