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INVESTIGATING ROUGIER*

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* I would like to thank Claudia Berndt for invaluable help through discussions and correspondence. Without her knowledge, I simply could not have written this paper. She is presently writing an intellectual biography of Rougier, as a Ph.D. thesis, under the supervision of Lutz Niethammer (Jena) and Henry Rousso (IHTP, Paris), and I owe to her most of my knowledge of Rougier's life. I could not adequately acknowledge her input in footnotes. I also benefited very much from conversations with Kevin Mulligan. I should also thank Michel Bourdeau, Steven Davis, Pascal Engel, Jan Lacki and Jean-Claude Pont. All translations of Rougier into English are mine. The reasons why this paper is written in English are purely accidental, it evolved from a paper written for an predominantly English-speaking audience. Some of the present material will appear under the title 'Louis Rougier, the Vienna Circle, and the Unity of Science', in E. Nemeth & N. Roudet (hrsg.), *Paris-Wien. Enzyklopädien im Vergleich*, Vienne, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis. I am currently working on a monograph entitled 'L'empirisme logique de Louis Rougier'.

Abstract : Louis Rougier is one of the major figures of French epistemology in the twentieth century but his work is largely unknown, because of his political involvement, from which he acquired a bad reputation. This paper serves two purposes. First, it is, in a biographical mode, an introduction to the main themes of Rougier's epistemology and political philosophy. Rougier was the only French associate of the Vienna Circle and his epistemology is a blend of his own conventionalism, originally developed as an interpretation of Poincaré, and the logical empiricism of Schlick. Rougier was also, in the 1930s, one of the first proponents of neo-liberalism in the twentieth century. Secondly, this paper contains the author's opinion, resulting from his own investigations, on some controversial issues concerning Rougier's political involvement, namely his defence of Pétain's foreign policy in the late 1940s his links with the *nouvelle droite* in the 1970s.

Résumé : Louis Rougier est une des figures les plus importantes de l'épistémologie française au vingtième siècle mais ses travaux ne sont pas connus, parce qu'il a acquis, par ses interventions politiques, une mauvaise réputation. Ce texte a deux objectifs. Premièrement, il s'agit, sous le mode de la biographie, d'une introduction aux grands thèmes de l'épistémologie et de la philosophie politique de Rougier. Il fut le seul membre associé du Cercle de Vienne en France, et son épistémologie est une synthèse de son conventionalisme, conçu à l'origine comme une interprétation de Poincaré, et de l'empirisme logique d'un Schlick. Rougier fut aussi, dans les années trente, un des premiers défenseurs du néo-libéralisme au vingtième siècle. Deuxièmement, ce texte contient une synthèse, suite à ses propres recherches, de l'opinion de l'A. sur deux des aspects les plus controversés de l'engagement politique de Rougier, soit sa défense de la politique étrangère de Vichy dans les années quarante et ses liens avec la « nouvelle droite » dans les années soixante-dix.

*J'ai souvent songé que le propre du clerc dans l'âge moderne
est de prêcher dans le désert. Je crois que j'y suis passé maître.*
Julien Benda

*Faute de savoir dans quelle catégorie vous classer, on ne vous
inscrit dans aucune.*
Louis Rougier

Louis Rougier has published more than 40 books.¹ He made significant contributions to philosophy and the history of religion. In this paper, I shall deal only with the former. Rougier played a role in the philosophical life of the *IIIe République* which is far from being negligible. To give only two examples: in the late 1930s, he promoted a renovated form of political and economical liberalism, a fact that makes him one of the first ‘neo-liberals’ of the twentieth-century, and he was also the only French associate of the *Wiener Kreis*, a fact that makes him the grandfather of French analytic philosophy. Alas, Rougier has disappeared from history books. He has a terrible reputation, not just as a mere right-wing extremist, but also as a ‘collaborator’ and an anti-Semite.² Facts about his life are for the most part unknown and his reputation is largely due to rumours. For a large number of French-speaking philosophers, however, Martin Heidegger’s political past is cause of no concern. Even after the truth about it was made public through a series of books, starting twenty years ago, many still feel that it should not detract us from learning great lessons from his philosophical writings. That Heidegger’s politics are intimately linked or not with his metaphysical —or, rather, anti-metaphysical— views is a matter of controversy. For my part, I see some glaringly obvious links. Others don’t. For some reason, this special kind of charity does not extend to Rougier. Perhaps this is because he was a logical empiricist and therefore that any reason to despise him is good enough. Perhaps there are some obvious links between being a logical empiricist and being of a very right-wing type and I fail to see them. At any rate, those who are, as I am, truly sensitive to the fact that they have an interest in an author who allegedly turns out to be a despicable human being cannot write about that

¹ Rougier had no children, his papers were deposited at the Chateau de Lourmarin (Provence) by his widow. There is no catalogue, as many boxes are still unopened, except for the papers in political economy. The family is still in possession of family letters and the *philosophischen Archivs* of the Universität Konstanz also contains copies of Rougier’s correspondence with Carnap, Neurath, Reichenbach and Schlick.

² For these accusations, see (Bounoure 1987).

author *as if* this fact is of no importance. I confess being curious about Rougier, because he was a militant atheist, a logical empiricist and a neo-liberal, quite an unusual combination for a philosopher of the *IIIe République*. I also confess that I find his philosophical prose clear and pedagogical. Perhaps the clarity of his prose makes him look a bit superficial. I find him, however, very well informed about the topics he discussed and, even when I disagreed, always challenging. But I could not set out to write about his philosophical ideas until I found out the truth about the man and his reputation. The following is the record of my investigations and the expression of my considered judgement on a number of delicate matters. It will also serve, I hope, as a general introduction to his philosophical work. My investigations allowed me to set aside my qualms and I hope that others, as they learn a little bit more about the truth, will share my conclusions. Of course, sceptics, whose opinion has been forged merely on the basis on rumours, will not be convinced. I do not expect this and neither would Rougier, who never tired of criticized this sort of *bêtise*, which consists of sticking to opinions previously gathered from conversations at the *café*, as Ortega y Gasset would say. I should add that the following is not meant as a definitive discussion of Rougier, but simply the current record of my investigations on this intriguing figure. A full biography is needed as well as a thorough study of his writings. I should perhaps add at the outset, just in case someone would worry, that I do not share Rougier's political views, even if I doubt that some of the rumours about him have much ground.

1. A Non-Conformist in the *IIIe République*

Louis Auguste Paul Rougier was born in 1889, the son of a wealthy doctor who lived Place Bellecourt in Lyon, the grandson of the first professor of political economy at the Université de Lyon. His mother was a particularly devout catholic. He was of frail constitution and pleurisy was to leave him invalidated; he entered the Lycée Ampère only at the age of 11 and when war broke out in 1914, he was declared unfit for service.³ In his teens, he spent a few summers in Germany. His library contains annotated books by Nietzsche that show that he read him *dans le texte* while learning German. But the main influence on Rougier was definitely Ernest Renan, whose influence on literary circles was as important at the turn of the last century; a fact that is easily forgotten because of he is, as opposed to Nietzsche, currently perceived as *désuet*. Rougier was always

³ It has been insinuated that he was a “*planqué*”, i.e., a draft dodger (Bounoure 1987, p. 146).

fond of quoting Renan and he considered him, along with Poincaré and Russell, as one of the most important influence on his work (Rougier 1969b, 71).

Although from a devout family, Rougier lost his faith during his adolescence (Rougier 1963a, 117). His family is fond of telling the story according to which he then ran away from home, in 1906, and tried to obtain an audience with the Pope, presumably to convince him through rational discussion of his errors.⁴ Militancy against religion, in particular against Christianity, was to become one of Rougier's main preoccupations. In the 1920s, he became editor of a series of volumes on the 'masters of antichristian thought' (*Les maîtres de la pensée antichrétienne*). Only four volumes appeared, including one on Nietzsche by Jules de Gaultier and Rougier's own edition, translation, and commentary of Celsus' *Alèthès logos*, probably the earliest extensive criticism of Christian doctrines, from a 4th-century Roman. This edition is still in use, the last reprint dating from 1997. From the 1950s onwards, Rougier was also active in *l'Union rationaliste* and the *Cercle Renan*. Rougier's thought branches off here into the history of religion, a domain about which he published regularly throughout his life: his first papers were published as early as 1914 and 1916 and he published books as late as 1972 and 1980.⁵ His work on the origins of Christian dogmas and his critique of Christianity played an important role, in the 1970s, on a new generation of extreme-right French intellectuals, such as Alain de Benoist.⁶ This movement, known as *la nouvelle droite*, was an attempt at elaborating an extreme-right ideology on a non-traditional, non-Catholic basis. I shall come back to this at the end of the paper.

Rougier also saw it as his duty to fight against the revival of scholastic philosophy in France. As a result of the impulse given by Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterna Patris* in 1879, a neo-Thomist movement had emerged in predominantly Catholic countries such as France; it had gained momentum in the 1920s and 1930s. Rougier published a lengthy critique of neo-Thomism

⁴ It seems, however, from family letters that Rougier's reasons for being in Rome were apparently more prosaic. A lady was involved. I owe this to Claudia Berndt.

⁵ See (Rougier 1914a), (Rougier 1916b), (Rougier 1972), (Rougier 1980). It would be too long to enumerate Rougier's writings in that field.

⁶ These intellectuals were also influenced by Nietzsche, whom they read through Jean Granier and Gilles Deleuze's commentaries, and by Heidegger. As it happens, these influences were already present in de Benoist's writings during the 1970s, including, e.g., his introductions to reprint of Rougier's works, and he finally shed Rougier's heritage in order to assume his current Nietzschean-Heideggerian rhetoric. See especially (de Benoist 1974), where the oft-quoted encomium to Rougier ends suddenly, only to be followed by some anti-Christian, Nietzschean musings.

in *La Scolastique et le thomisme*, a huge book of more than 800 pages (Rougier 1925).⁷ It was not written as a piece of scholarship, Rougier wanted to show that the scholastic attempt to reconcile the revealed truths of Christian religion with Greek rationalism was a complete failure. His peculiar approach was to ‘axiomatize’ scholastic philosophy and to show that the conclusions did not follow from the premises, unless one committed one of a number of “*paralogismes*”, i.e., fallacies that are committed in good faith and not with the intention to mislead. Rougier’s book was very controversial and he was accused of plagiarism by Dominicans.⁸ The leading neo-Thomist figures of day, Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson,⁹ became bitter enemies. Whenever they could, they put pokes in the wheels. For example, Gilson got the Université de Montréal to withdraw an offer in 1945.¹⁰ However, it does not appear that Rougier’s relations with neo-Thomists followers of Pierre Duhem, such as the General Ernest Vuillemin, were strained. Rougier’s atheistic and anti-scholastic stance was unusual for a philosopher of the *IIIe République*, the vast majority were practising Christians.¹¹ This is one of many unpopular causes to which Rougier was to associate his name.

At the lycée, Rougier’s philosophy teacher had been André Cresson and, at the Université de Lyon, he became a pupil of Edmond Goblot, who had interest in logic. Rougier was to engage early on into a debate with him; he pointed out some errors made by his teacher, who believed that “reasoning is never independent from the objects about which one is reasoning” and that “formal logic is absolutely sterile” (Goblot 1917, xxii-xxiii).¹² Rougier, who was not a logicist, was nevertheless one of the first in France to take up the cause of new formal logic, after Louis Couturat but before even Jean Nicod. Rougier was indeed asking for a reform of the teaching of logic as early as 1917 (Rougier 1917b). Formal logic was another unpopular cause. Goblot was not alone in believing that formal logic is sterile: Poincaré and Brunschvicg also shared this obviously erroneous view, which almost has the status of an *évidence* for French philosophers.

⁷ Rougier also published a *précis* of that book in the 1960s (Rougier 1966), with a new introduction, at the request of Jean-François Revel.

⁸ See (Descoqs 1927), (Théry 1927). A debate took place in the *Revue des jeunes*, in which Rougier replied to his critics.

⁹ Rougier had attacked Gilson directly in (Rougier 1931a).

¹⁰ Evidence for this claim is to be found in Rougier’s correspondence with Édouard Montpetit kept at the Chateau de Lourmarin. Montpetit had already invited Rougier to speak in March-April 1945. The lectures he gave were published later that year as *La Créance morale de la France* (Rougier 1945b).

¹¹ For a sociological study of philosophy under the *IIIe République*, see (Fabiani 1988).

¹² For the Rougier-Goblot exchange, see (Rougier 1916a, 810-813), (Goblot 1917, xvii-xxiii), (Rougier 1919b).

Their deleterious influence meant that, in France, logic was to remain in the doldrums for most of the twentieth century.

Having obtained the *agrégation de philosophie*, Rougier taught at various lycées until 1924. He taught in Algiers from 1917 to 1920 and at the lycée Chateaubriand in Rome from 1920 to 1924.¹³ He became in the meantime *Docteur ès Lettres* from the Sorbonne in 1920. His theses were published as *La philosophie géométrique de Poincaré* (Rougier 1920a) and *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* (Rougier 1920b). One can see Rougier's lifelong philosophical work as the development of the theses argued for in these books and culminating in the publication, at the age of 65, of his *Traité de la connaissance* (Rougier 1955).

The study on *La philosophie géométrique de Poincaré* may profitably be read in conjunction with *La structure des théories déductives*, published a year later (Rougier 1921a). Rougier believed that the influence of Émile Boutroux on Poincaré had been deleterious (Rougier 1947c, 15); in short, he believed that Poincaré wrapped his ideas a neo-Kantian garb that do not fit them. These two books contain a study of the notion of an axiomatic theory, following recent work by Hilbert, Peano, Padoa, Russell etc., which form the background for a new and fruitful interpretation of Poincaré's conventionalism, disentangled from its neo-Kantian garb. Rougier was able to provide a sharp characterization of the conventional part of a scientific theory and thus to provide an interpretation of Poincaré's conventionalism.¹⁴ In a nutshell, since the axioms of a formal system are assumed but not proven, they can be taken to be conventional; they are the result of 'tacit agreement', or as he would put it, of "decree resulting from a free decision" (Rougier 1920a, 121) or "*décisions volontaires*" (Rougier 1960, 51). According Rougier, a particular type of convention is relevant here, the 'optional conventions' (*conventions facultatives*), i.e., conventions that "can always be replaced by a contrary convention, without causing more than a simple modification of the scientific language" (Rougier 1920a, 122 & 200). Poincaré's 'geometric' philosophy could thus be seen as a special case of this general form of conventionalism, where alternative geometries are construed, through term by term translation, as isomorphic models of a more general axiomatic system. This view was to be popularized by Jean

¹³ It was Rougier's discussions in Rome with the neo-Thomist Father Garrigou-Lagrange, who was to become an apologist of Pétain's *révolution nationale*, that spurred him into writing his book on *La scolastique et le thomisme* (Rougier 1963a, 122).

¹⁴ Rougier's interpretation of Poincaré was already set out in what appears to be his very first publication, 'Henri Poincaré et la mort des vérités nécessaires' (Rougier 1913).

Nicod (Nicod 1930), Ernst Nagel (Nagel 1961, chap. 9) and Max Black (Black 1942), who explicitly discusses Rougier. However, it is recognized today as an inaccurate interpretation of Poincaré.¹⁵

Rougier believed this conventionalism to be the solution to the deadlock that traditionally opposed rationalism and empiricism. The conclusion to *La philosophie géométrique de Poincaré* begins with these words:

It will turn out that the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry has been the origin of a considerable revolution in the theory of knowledge and, hence, in our metaphysical conceptions about man and the universe. One can say, briefly, that this discovery has succeeded in breaking up the dilemma within which epistemology has been locked by the claims of traditional logic: the principles of science are either *apodictic truths* (analytic or synthetic *a priori* judgements) or *assertoric truths* (empirical or intuitive judgements). Poincaré, taking his inspiration from the work of Lobatchevski and Riemann, pointed out in the particularly significant case of geometry that there is another solution: the principles may be simple optional conventions. (Rougier 1920a, 199)

To this Rougier adds, a little bit further:

A series of statements hitherto conceived of by rationalists as absolutely necessary truths, independent of our mind and of nature, by criticists, as *a priori* laws of our sensibility or of our understanding, by empiricists, as truths of experience, are seen, after Poincaré's critique, as mere conventions. These conventions are not true but practical, they are not necessary but optional, they are not imposed by experience but merely suggested by it. Far from being independent from our mind and nature, they exist only by tacit agreement of all minds and depend strictly upon external conditions in the environment in which we happen to live. (Rougier 1920a, 200-201)

Principles “exist only by tacit agreement” and they “depend strictly upon external conditions in the environment in which we happen to live”. This was Rougier's “third solution”, which is the key to his entire philosophical work. One should notice that it is at one with both Comte's notion of *l'esprit positif* and the *wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung* of the Vienna Circle. Later, Rougier extended this “third solution” by arguing, on the basis of the tautological character of logical truth and of the existence of many-valued logics, that even logical necessity is the result of conventions (Rougier 1939/40, 1940, 1941). In the *Traité de la connaissance*, he expressed the view in these terms:

The origin of logical necessity resides, therefore, in the definitions which result from our linguistic conventions. The tautological character of the laws of logic is simply a special case of the general principle that *what is true by definition cannot at the same time be held to be false*. In a word, it rests on the necessity of giving univocal meanings to our conventions in order to be able to communicate with others and with ourselves. Conventions are not cognitive acts, they are decrees of our will. We are not bound in our conventions except by the necessity of being consistent. (Rougier 1955, 125)

¹⁵ See (Stump 1991).

There are, however, many difficulties with Rougier's conventionalist stance, some of which I shall discuss in section 2.

The book on *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* can be seen as the development of this viewpoint into a detailed critique of traditional forms of *a priori* rationalism. The target of Rougier's critique is a pair of claims that are said to characterize rationalist doctrines, over and above some key disagreements:

Rationalism admits the existence of truths that are objective, *a priori*, unconditionally necessary, independent from our mind and from nature, that are at the same time laws of our thought and laws of being, such that our mind has no choice but to submit to them and nature to conform to them. To these truths, one give the names of rational or eternal truths. The faculty that grasps them, which is distinct from perception and empirical understanding, is reason. This faculty is *sui generis* and it is one and indivisible. It is in equal amount in all men and pertains to them in virtue of their essence. (Rougier 1920b, 437)

Rougier's main line of attack consisted of pointing out that statements that were held by rationalists to be eternal truths either turned out to be mere empirical truths or optional conventions (Rougier 1920b, 439). Rougier also tried to show that attempts at giving rational grounds for the above pair of theses were based on paralogisms.¹⁶ One should note that Rougier's critique of the belief in the existence of eternal truths was an open attack on scientific and mathematical realism, and his anti-realism was not limited to a critique of traditional forms of rationalism, such as Thomism or the various post-Cartesian systems of the eighteenth century: among the variants of realism also criticized are Cantor's Platonism as well as Russell's 'analytic realism' (Rougier 1920b, chap. x).¹⁷ The psychologistic nature of some of Rougier's arguments is quite striking: for example, he explains the realist belief in the existence of mind-independent mathematical objects as the result of a *sentiment d'étrangeté* or 'feeling of alienation' (Rougier 1920b, 289). Psychologism was not perceived as deficient and was not rooted out of French epistemology until after Bachelard.¹⁸

By the time Rougier defended his doctoral theses in 1920, he had already published an enormous amount in the philosophy of physics. His first paper on the use of non-Euclidean geometry in relativity theory was published in *L'enseignement mathématique* in 1914, when he was only 25 (Rougier 1914b). Rougier's most important paper in the philosophy of physics was

¹⁶ The four main paralogisms are described in (Rougier 1960b, 25).

¹⁷ See also the end of 'La matérialisation de l'énergie', where Rougier takes a finitist, empiricist, pragmatic stance against Cantorians from the standpoint of philosophy of physics (Rougier 1917/18, 60-61).

¹⁸ On this point, see (Leroux 2002).

on ‘La matérialisation de l’énergie’; it appeared under three different formats (Rougier 1917/18, 1919a, 1921b) and it was also translated into English in 1921 (Rougier 1921c). In that text, Rougier showed how recent developments of physics had undermined the traditional conceptual opposition between energy, which was said to have no inertia and heaviness, and matter, which was supposed to possess mass. Metaphysical problems originating in this dualism, e.g., that of their interaction, were described by Rougier as ‘pseudo-problems’:

It is a general truth that the majority of philosophical problems are insoluble because the problems do not properly exist. The subjectivism of our senses, the anthropomorphism of our reasoning by analogy, the substantialistic tendency to realize our ideas and to take purely logical distinctions as objects lead us to conceive fictitious problems, or pseudo-problems, that have no more meaning than the insolubilia on which the eristics of the ancient sophists [...] were exercised. To solve them is always to show that they were problems which have been badly stated. (Rougier 1921a, 1)

It was Rougier’s belief that problems linked with the metaphysical distinction between matter and energy would ‘vanish’ as the result of advances in modern physics:

[...] it is shown to be true that the two terms, taken to be diametrically opposite, enjoy such properties in common as explain their interaction; energy appears to be endowed with inertia, weight, and structure, like matter. [...] the metaphysical problem [...] vanishes of itself. (Rougier 1921c, 3)

There is nothing new here, this anti-metaphysical approach has its roots in Comte’s positivism and it has antecedents in the German-language philosophy of science (L. Boltzmann, H. Hertz, C. Menger). But it is quite striking that Rougier wrote about *pseudo-problèmes* more than ten years before Carnap wrote about *Scheinprobleme*.

At the 1921 *International Congress of Philosophy*, at Oxford, Rougier further argued that relativity theory was dissolving pseudo-problems linked with the Kantian conception of space.¹⁹ He also published a paper to show how recent advances in science discredited Kant’s recourse to intuition (Rougier 1919c) and further papers on symmetry (Rougier 1917a) and entropy (Rougier 1918a, 1918b), that are of a more expository nature and lack philosophical bite. The papers on entropy are Rougier’s unhappy contribution to a controversy about the work of an obscure Frenchman, L. Selme, who argued against the principle of the increase of entropy. Selme’s viewpoint is indefensible but Rougier’s discussion had no clear conclusion.

Rougier’s papers on modern physics are well-informed and often contain long developments that show a remarkable understanding of the issues, although they are not entirely

¹⁹ The paper was not published in the proceedings, but its content was reported in a survey paper on ‘Le meeting d’Oxford’ in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (Lenoir 1921, 127-129).

free of errors (as one should expect) and he often remains a bit undecided on key controversies such as the Lorentz-Einstein controversy discussed in ‘La matérialisation de l’énergie’. (Rougier took a clearer stance in the *Traité de la connaissance*.) It may be the case that Rougier did not elaborate his own philosophy of physics. But, he was a precursor, promoting what was then a minority view. Indeed, one should not forget that in those days, although sound refutations of it were to be published by André Metz (Metz 1923, 1928), a majority of French philosophers, e.g., Maurice Merleau-Ponty, believed in the validity of Bergson’s critique of relativity theory. This is because they simply did not understand relativity theory, because, contrary to someone like Rougier, they did not make the effort properly to acquaint themselves with it. The clarity and scope of Rougier’s writings, on Poincaré’s conventionalism and on modern physics, should suffice to place him alongside the great figures of French scientific philosophy in the first half of the twentieth century: Gaston Bachelard, Jean Cavaillès, Louis Couturat, Pierre Duhem, Albert Lautmann, Émile Meyerson, Jean Nicod, Henri Poincaré, and Abel Rey.²⁰ That Rougier’s contribution to this great tradition is seldom recognized is entirely due to his political reputation. Rougier also did editorial work worth noticing. He edited the fifth volume of Pierre Duhem’s *Système du monde*. Another editorial project, backed by Gustave Le Bon and Pierre and Émile Boutroux, of a fifth volume of writings by Poincaré entitled *L’opportunisme scientifique* did not materialize. Apparently, the family objected to it and the volume appeared only in... 2002 (Poincaré 2002).

Despite these achievements, Rougier’s academic career was not exactly a sparkling success. He had to spend years abroad, at first in Algiers and Rome. Later he had appointments at Cairo in 1931-36, New York in 1941-1943 (New School of Social Research and Saint John’s College), and the Université de Montreal in 1945. His first university appointment in France was in the provincial town of Besançon, in 1925. He was released from teaching duties at his own request from 1940 onwards but after the war he was dismissed and later struck off from the *Éducation Nationale* in 1948, for political reasons. (I discuss this delicate matter in section 4.) After winning an appeal, Rougier was re-instated in 1954 and he was offered a job in another provincial town,

²⁰ I thus strongly disagree with the idea that “one ought not to be impressed” by Rougier’s works in scientific philosophy (Bounoure 1987, 146) and even less with the idea that these were merely the source of a “rhetoric, destined to be the “method” of the Nouvelle droite” (Bounoure 1987, 147). In Parisian intellectual circles ‘positivism’ is often synonymous with ‘right-wing’ and the ideal of ‘objectivity’ considered as *bourgeois*. Alas, Rougier’s political connections lend credence to such preposterous fallacies.

Caen. But he had already reached 65 and retired within a year. Rougier could never have hoped to secure a prestigious position at the Sorbonne. He was a true non-conformist within the *IIIe République*, an atheist who criticized neo-Thomism at a time when most philosophers were practicing Catholics, and a logical positivist at a time when most philosophers remained within the ‘reflexive’ tradition of Victor Cousin and Maine de Biran (*spiritualisme*).²¹ That the *Congrès International de philosophie scientifique*, a showcase for the Vienna Circle, took place at the Sorbonne was a further affront to the French philosophical community. At the age of 90, Rougier commented with irony:

French philosophers never forgave me for shaming them with a very successful *Congrès International*. This is why I had to spend part of my career abroad. (Rougier 1979b, 46-47)²²

Doors remained closed indeed at the Sorbonne and, when Goblot retired in Lyon in 1930, a minor historian of philosophy, Jean Wahl, was chosen in his stead. Rougier believed that he was the natural successor to Goblot and felt slighted. It seems that the key figure working behind the scenes had been Wahl’s uncle, Léon Brunschvicg. Brunschvicg effectively ruled over French philosophy in the 1920s and 1930s and a resentful Rougier called him, in a letter to Lucy, ‘the great rabbi’.²³ He had been on Rougier’s doctoral committee and, as I pointed out, Rougier’s thesis owed some of its orientation to Brunschvicg, but the initial reasons for their antagonism are unknown to me. Surely, Brunschvicg, who could best be labelled as neo-Kantian, profoundly disliked both empiricism and formal logic; he had argued in 1912 against Russell and Couturat in *Les étapes de la philosophie mathématique* (Brunschvicg 1947).²⁴ It is clear that Brunschvicg’s opinions in these matters had a deleterious influence on the course of French philosophy in the twentieth century, which is still to be felt today. It is also possible that Brunschvicg and Lévy-Bruhl, who was also in a position of control on teaching appointments across France, may have strongly disliked the political tone of the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, with

²¹ Again, see (Fabiani 1988).

²² This is actually chronologically incorrect since Rougier’s ‘exile’ was largely prior to the Paris Congress.

²³ Early in his correspondence (to be found in Lourmarin) to Lucy, who was Jewish, Rougier discussed the issue of anti-Semitism in terms that can at best be described as ambiguous. His letters contain explicit attacks against Léon Blum as well as Léon Brunschvicg.

²⁴ Brunschvicg dismissed the idea that symbolic logic could contribute to the clarification of the foundations of mathematics as ... an “illusion” (Brunschvicg 1947, 408).

its attack on egalitarianism.²⁵

At any rate, Rougier never bore any visible grudge against Lévy-Bruhl, whose anthropological work he always cited with approval, but in 1931, Rougier published a rather nasty polemic paper, exposing serious lacunae in Brunschvicg's scholarship on Pascal and accusing him of falsification (Rougier 1931b, 553). He is said also privately to have threatened to divulge more scandalous material and to publish a book on these issues.²⁶ These threats, towards a deeply admirable man later to be hounded by the Nazis during the war (he died from natural causes before getting caught), did much damage to Rougier's reputation. Rougier's later involvement with Vichy was to lend credence to the idea that he was merely a mentally unstable, dangerous man and an anti-Semite. But was it his alleged anti-Semitism that caused Rougier's intense personal dislike of Brunschvicg or was it the latter which was the cause for anti-Semitic remarks that he made to Lucy? The facts that Rougier had so many close friends that were Jewish (e.g., in the 1930s and 1940s, Simone and André Weil, Ludwig von Mises, Alfred Schütz, etc.) and that Lucy herself was Jewish, make me favour the second alternative. This, of course, is no excuse for the repugnant remarks candidly made *in private* to Lucy.

Whilst on delicate matters, one should further note Rougier's criticism in the introduction to *Les paralogismes du rationalisme* of the belief in a faculty of reason 'one and indivisible', which contains a lengthy, virulent critique of political egalitarianism, a 'mystique' which is said to have its origin in rationalist principles (Rougier 1920b, 13-21). The political tone of these pages is ambiguous, to say the least. (I shall come back to this issue in section 3.) Be this as it may, members of the Vienna Circle were fond of that book, Philip Frank described it as "the best all-round criticism of the school philosophy that I know of" (Frank 1950, 48). It seems that Rougier's reputation within the Circle was largely due to it, and it is probably because of its political innuendo that it was praised by Aldous Huxley (Huxley 1927, xviii). But Rougier's position was also somewhat misunderstood, in particular by Italians, who portrayed him as a

²⁵ Lévy-Bruhl, who was an orthodox positivist (see his (Lévy-Bruhl 1913)) was also a socialist, who wrote a biography of Jean Jaurès.

²⁶ I have found a full-length manuscript in the Fonds Rougier in the summer 2002 that fits this description. Whatever the reason, this fall out is quite regrettable since it masks the fact that Rougier owes a lot to Brunschvicg. For example, Rougier's belief that the philosopher must first learn about the various sciences, is typical of Brunschvicg, who instituted formal instruction in science for the philosophy candidates at the *École Normale Supérieure* and Rougier's critique of rationalism, which opens up to an evolutionary approach to 'reason', bears the hallmark of

relativist — he was even compared to Spengler—²⁷ and by Julien Benda.²⁸

It is true, on the one hand, that the denial of universal, eternal, *a priori* truths meant for Rougier that one had to throw away the traditional concept of an universal reason, “*naturellement égale en tous les hommes*”, as Descartes said in *Le discours de la méthode*. And the ‘plasticity’ of mind is, after all, a premise to all forms of relativism. One should note two things here. First, the idea of ‘plasticity’ was obviously not new to French philosophy; it had been championed by elders such as Édouard Le Roy and Léon Brunschvicg, to whom Rougier owes this basic orientation of his philosophy. Secondly, Rougier wanted to replace Cartesian concept of reason by that of *mentalité* (mentality), taken from French anthropologist and sociologist, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Lévy-Bruhl 1922a, 1922b). The uniqueness of ‘reason’ was thus replaced by the various mentalities, and Rougier called repeatedly for a science of ‘mental structures’, which he never really developed (Rougier 1921d; 1924, 209-213; 1960b, 30-34). Incidentally, it is also very curious that, although he recognized that a precise definition of the concepts of ‘mentality’ or ‘mental structure’ is not an easy matter (Rougier 1921d, 209), Rougier never fully realized that ‘*mentalité*’ is a rather likely candidate for Neurath’s *index verborum prohibitorum*.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to attribute to Rougier a robust form of relativism: he never believed, for example, in the incommensurability of cultures; to take one famous Spenglerian example, he certainly never believed that we could not understand Greek mathematics. Moreover, Rougier did not hold that the different cultures are on equal footing or the weaker claim that it is not possible to find a standpoint from which to rank them. The very few remarks that one can glean on that topic show that he believed in a form of ‘survival of the fittest’ for cultures, e.g., in the *Traité de la connaissance*:

[...] when people of different languages, mentalities and civilizations meet and compete, a natural selection is likely to take place in favour of the mental structure which is the most efficient, the most apt to insure the domination of man over nature and success in his endeavours. This mentality

Brunschvicg’s philosophy. Although it is usually ignored, this aspect of Brunschvicg had a profound influence on twentieth-century French epistemology.

²⁷ See (Tilgher 1922), (Giusso 1929). See also the later work of the Argentinian (Pardo 1954).

²⁸ Benda categorized Rougier as a “mobilist” in (Benda 1950). ‘Mobilism’ is Benda’s idiosyncratic term for the view that there are no constants in the human mind, across time and cultures. Benda’s critique should not hide the fact that the author of *La trahison des clercs* and Rougier have much in common in their rejection of some of the tenets of French philosophy, as well as in their defence of liberalism. For example, Benda lucidly attributes to mobilism/relativism some unpalatable moral and political consequences such as the rejection of the first of two principles of democratic government listed below (Benda 1950, 163), while it was the arch-principle of Rougier’s liberalism.

tends to merge with that which developed within the white race since the Galilean revolution [...]
(Rougier 1955, 426)

The allusion to the “white race” smacks of racism and it is likely to please detractors. However, one should note that this is a late remark and it is possible that Rougier was influenced at that late stage by Friedrich von Hayek, who famously held the idea that there could be a form of natural selection for groups analogous to that between species.²⁹ This idea need not be construed as racist. Late in his life, Rougier was to elaborate on the ‘Promethean’ or ‘Faustian’ mentality of the West, in *Le génie de l’occident*, published in English under the title *Genius of the West*, where one finds echoes of this remark (Rougier 1969a, 428).³⁰ If anything, Rougier’s position is a very good example of the *moral and political dangers of relativism*. Only recently have we begun to realize that relativism is a very weak basis for a social critique and that it has also been a pillar of anti-liberal views; one merely has to think here of the fate of Spengler’s *Decline of the West*. As a matter of fact, Rougier’s evolutionary theory of reason did much to endear him to the emerging *nouvelle droite*, in the 1970s, despite the fact that *Le génie de l’occident* contains yet another defence of the principles of political liberalism, on empiricist and pragmatic grounds (Rougier 1969a, 301-303). I shall discuss this last point, which is at the core of Rougier’s political philosophy, in section 3 and come back to the relations with the *nouvelle droite* in section 4.

The key to Rougier’s thinking on civilizations, which is a new element in his thought from the post-war period, is Arnold Toynbee’s theory of ‘challenge and response’ (Toynbee 1960, 61f.), (Rougier 1969b, 69 & 71). Following Toynbee, Rougier perceived Western civilization as the only ‘progressive’ civilization in history. Its readiness to face new challenges³¹ is described as the result of a ‘mentality’:

In short, Western civilization is the result of a mentality. This mentality consists in refusing to accept the miseries of human condition and in trying to improve it by ceaseless effort to change the order of things rather than suffer from it, in order to adapt it to our needs and to our dreams.
(Rougier 1958, 425)

This mentality, which is pictured by the myth of Prometheus, is described by Rougier as being

²⁹ On Hayek, see (Nadeau 2001). There are, however, no references to Hayek in the *Traité de la connaissance*.

³⁰ The origin of that book is in a paper published in 1958, ‘Valeur et avenir de la civilisation occidentale’ (Rougier 1958).

³¹ Incidentally, in the early 1970s Rougier was already presenting ecology as the next challenge to Western civilization, along with the demographic explosion (Rougier 1969b, 69). He believed that the solution resides in a new maxim: “minimal use of resources and maximal durability of products” (Rougier 1976, 17) and he called for a new definition of national accounts (Rougier 1975).

the result of an historical process, beginning in Ancient Greece. He thus proposed nothing less than a ‘speculative’ philosophy of history but, the process being recognized as being purely contingent, *Le génie de l’occident* reads like a poor version of Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of history, with the essential articulations shorn of their metaphysical and dialectical garb: man first demarcates himself from primitive mentality with the advent of rationality in Ancient Greece. This rationalism became universal through the Roman empire; the Romans added to the Greek heritage a legal system that made room for a salutary ecumenism. But Greek rationalism is described as the mere invention of scientific, deductive theories but unable to deal with practical matters and to conquer nature; this was to be its downfall but Christianity was to bring about the moral and social revolution, with the abolition of slavery, etc., etc.

Apart from these thoughts on natural selection of cultures and *mentalités*, the ideas presented in this section were all forged in the 1910s and 1920s, therefore before Rougier’s encounter with the German and Austrian ‘positivist’ schools, i.e., Hans Reichenbach and his *Gesellschaft für empirische Philosophie* and Moritz Schlick and the *Verein Ernst Mach*, also known as the Vienna Circle. At the beginning of last century, some philosophers, e.g., Édouard Le Roy, were described as having given new impetus to the old positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte and the expression “*nouveau positivisme*” was introduced to refer to this renewal. These developments in the thought of Rougier, in particular his interpretation of Poincaré’s positivism, can all be seen as part of this ‘new positivism’, i.e., a re-thinking of positivism in light of the momentous developments in physics and mathematics that took place in the around the turn of the last century. The more one reads Rougier, the more one realizes that, contrary to most French philosophers in the 1920s and 1930s (and, I daresay, today) who were terribly hackneyed, he was curious about what happened outside French academia, especially in Italy and in the German-speaking world. (His books contain some of the first discussions in France of authors such as G. Ferrero, V. Pareto, W. Sombart, and M. Weber.) It is thus not surprising that he was to learn about the existence of Reichenbach’s and Schlick’s groups and that he was immediately to recognize the deep affinities between his thought and theirs. Rougier reported Reichenbach’s and Schlick’s work as early as 1931 in the *Larousse mensuel illustré* (Rougier 1931c).

2. Logical Empiricism: A Forgotten Associate

Rougier was the only French associate of the Vienna Circle. Alas, he is the only major figure of

the Circle's periphery to have received less than full attention in Friedrich Stadler's monumental study, *The Vienna Circle* (Stadler 2001). Rougier's first letter to Moritz Schlick is dated November 27, 1931.³² On the occasion of a *mission* to central Europe, Rougier took part in activities of his Circle for the first time in 1934, with a conference on Poincaré's philosophy of science.³³ Later in the same year, Rougier also presented a paper at the *Prager Vorkonferenz*.³⁴ On that occasion, he was nominated to the organisational committee of the *First International Congress of Scientific Philosophy*, which was to take place at the Sorbonne in Paris, in 1935. According to Rougier, the idea of such congresses occurred to him in a conversation with Reichenbach in 1932 (Rougier 1936b, 3),³⁵ and there is evidence that it was Rougier who lobbied for Paris as the venue.³⁶ Along with Neurath, Rougier organized the *First International Congress of Scientific Philosophy*; he edited afterwards the proceedings in eight volumes.³⁷

During this *First International Congress*, Rougier was elected member of the organisational committee for the *International Encyclopaedia of United Science*,³⁸ along with R. Carnap, P. Frank, J. Jörgensen, C. Morris and O. Neurath (Carnap *et alii* 1936). As I pointed out, Rougier's

³²A copy is available at the philosophical archives at Konstanz. Photocopies (and not originals) of some of the letters to Schlick not to be found in Konstanz are in the archives at the Chateau de Lourmarin.

³³Evidence for these claims is found in (Rougier 1960, 53) and in a letter from Rougier to his mother reproduced in (Allais 1990, 60-61). This letter also shows that Rougier's visit to Vienna coincided with the 1934 uprising.

³⁴Rougier gave at the *Prager Vorkonferenz* a paper on 'La scolastique et la logique' (Rougier 1935a), which presents in a condensed form some of the conclusions of his very long study, *La Scolastique et le thomisme* (Rougier 1925). At the following *Eight International Congress of Philosophy*, he gave a paper in political philosophy, 'De l'opinion dans les démocraties et dans les gouvernements autoritaires', which contains a clear statement of the fundamentals of his neo-liberal standpoint (Rougier 1936a).

³⁵From a letter to Schlick dated November 6, 1932 (in Konstanz), one finds that Rougier, returning from a mission to the Soviet Union (about which, see section 3 below), passed by Berlin to give a paper at the *Gesellschaft für empirische Philosophie* in July 1932.

³⁶The correspondence between Neurath and Rougier, which is available in the philosophical archives at the University of Konstanz extends over 500 pages. It is mainly about organisational matters concerning the Congresses of 1935 and 1937 as well as about the *Encyclopaedia*. There is little philosophical content. In the earliest letter, dated November 14, 1933, Rougier asked, on the behalf of a number of French organizations, that the *Vorkonferenz* takes place in Paris instead of Prague. About his collaboration with Neurath, Rougier wrote to Schlick that Neurath is "ripe for the most byzantine Soviet bureaucracy" (June 16, 1935; copy available at Konstanz).

³⁷At the Congress, Rougier gave the opening and closing lectures, respectively (Rougier 1936c) and (Rougier 1936d), and he further contributed with a paper on the 'Pseudo-problèmes résolus et soulevées par la Logique d'Aristote' (Rougier 1936e).

³⁸Incidentally, a project which was very different in nature from that of the *Encyclopédie française*, which was set up in the 1930s. The French equivalent of the 'heart' of Neurath's *Encyclopaedia* was an introductory volume, to the elaboration of which Abel Rey was involved, on 'the mental equipment' (*l'outillage mental*), from primitive to modern societies. Some of Rougier's suggestions to Neurath on the proper plan for the *Encyclopaedia*, e.g., in the letter dated January 12, 1938 (in the archives at Konstanz), suggest that Rougier thought this introductory volume to the *Encyclopédie française* worth imitating.

reputation within the Circle was largely due to one of his book on *Les paralogismes du rationalisme*, and it is probably for this reason that Rougier was asked to write a monograph on the history of rationalism for the *Encyclopaedia*. For reasons that are unknown to me, it was never published. In the late 1930s, Rougier got involved in political matters and his writings and activities in 1938 and 1939 were, with a few exceptions, entirely devoted to political philosophy and political economy. I surmise that he simply had no time during those years to sit down and write a monograph on rationalism and that he never wrote it. At any rate, there are no traces in the correspondence between Rougier and Neurath, at least until early 1940,³⁹ of any dispute, such as the notorious one surrounding Reichenbach's contribution to the *Encyclopaedia*. On the contrary, the exchange of letters shows that Rougier was quite conciliatory and that he adjusted the plan of his monograph in order to make room for a further a pair of monographs by Santillana and Zilsel, which were eventually published (Santillana & Zilsel 1941).⁴⁰

Rougier also organized two years later in 1937, again with help of Neurath, a further Parisian meeting, the *Third International Congress for the Unity of Science*.⁴¹ This congress took place immediately before the *Ninth International Congress of Philosophy*, also known as the *Congrès Descartes*, within which there was also a special section on the Unity of Science, which was, once again, organized by Rougier and Neurath. The congresses of 1935 and 1937 provided a wonderful showcase for the logical positivist movement — “our philosophy”, as Rougier called it — in France. As is well known, it attracted precious little attention. The reasons for this are well worth an investigation, but this is outside the scope of this paper. I should at least point out that Rougier became totally isolated after the war and that his isolation was not caused merely by hostility from more traditional quarters (e.g., the neo-Thomists or the followers of Bergson or Brunschvicg) but also from lack of solidarity from other French-speaking philosophers of science. One early example of this is the *Colloque des philosophes scientifiques de langue*

³⁹ The last letter in the archives at Konstanz, from Neurath to Rougier, dates from April 24, 1940 and it indicates that Neurath is still waiting for Rougier's contribution. There is no reason to believe that Neurath and Rougier stopped exchanging letters in April 1940, but I am not aware of any other letters. The surviving letters from 1938 and 1939 indicate that Rougier kept postponing the submission date because he was involved in what looked to him as the more pressing matters at the time, namely his activities promoting neo-liberalism as the alternative to the ideologies of central planification (socialism *and* corporatism) and as the only solution for peace in Europe.

⁴⁰ I refer here in particular to the letter dated May 30, 1938, which shows that Rougier and Santillana established the plans of their monographs together, or the letter from June 19, 1938, where Rougier even suggested editorial revisions to Zilsel's monograph, in the archives at Konstanz.

⁴¹ Rougier gave again the opening lecture, but it remained unpublished.

française, which took place in Brittany, on September 10-17, 1938: Rougier tried unsuccessfully to convince his colleagues (e.g., G. Bachelard, J.-L. Destouches, F. Gonseth, R. Wavre) to publish their papers in *Erkenntnis*, and thus to align them with the logical empiricist movement; his correspondence at the time with Neurath shows that Gonseth doctrinal opposition to logical empiricism carried the day.⁴²

Rougier was not merely an active associate of the Circle but also a close friend of some of its members. He was especially close to Moritz Schlick. His most important publication after 1945 — arguably his most important book — the *Traité de la connaissance* (Rougier 1955) is dedicated to the memory of Schlick. Rougier was also close to Hans Reichenbach. Their correspondence is of a personal nature; at times they would, for example, share opinions about their respective situations, Rougier’s appointment in Cairo (1931-1936) overlapping with Reichenbach’s stay in Istanbul (1933-1938). Rougier helped one of Reichenbach’s sons to secure a visa prior to the war. As a matter of fact, Rougier was able through his connections within the French government (themselves the result of his political activities, about which more in the next section), to obtain visas and facilitate the transit of numerous intellectuals from central Europe. For example, the Rougier archives at the Chateau de Lourmarin contain a letter of thanks by Friedrich Waismann which implies that Rougier helped him to find his way to England; information recently resurfaced that shows that Rougier also helped Ludwig von Mises (among others) to obtain a visa to the United States in July 1940.⁴³

Rougier met his third wife when on vacation on the shores of an Austrian lake with Schlick in 1935. Schlick had left his wife behind in Vienna and was joined by his secretary, Lucy Friedman (*née* Herzker). She was married at the time to a Viennese lawyer and had obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna, something rather rare for a woman in Vienna in the 1930s. During these summer weeks, Lucy and Louis fell in love. After the *Anschluss*, Rougier sponsored her and her family (the Friedmans had a daughter), so that they could escape persecution. The Friedmans eventually moved to New York but Rougier obtained a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1940 that allowed him to join her in early 1941. Lucy eventually obtained a divorce and they married in December 1942, in New York. They went back to France in the late 1940s and lived together until Rougier’s death in 1982 at the age of 94.

⁴² Especially the letters dated September 22, 1938 and November 14, 1938, in Konstanz.

Rougier was already over 40 years old when he first met Schlick but, although his philosophical views were at that stage fully developed, he enthusiastically adopted the outlook of the Vienna Circle. Wittgenstein's conception of logical truths as tautologies was an important discovery for him; he also adopted a number of theses held by Schlick. He was perceived and he even described himself as a "disciple of strict obedience" (Rougier 1960, 55). After the 1935 Congress, Rougier published in the *Revue de Paris* a paper entitled 'Une philosophie nouvelle: l'empirisme logique, à propos d'un Congrès récent', in order to promote logical empiricism among a larger audience. This paper contains an amazing *tour de force*, a summary of logical empiricism in one sentence:

These are the key ideas of the Viennese School: the syntactic character of the laws of logic and mathematics and, hence, the disappearance of the problem of their applicability to nature; the tautological character of pure thought and, hence, the denial of any material *a priori* and of the possibility of a radical form of empiricism; the reduction of philosophy to the study of the formal structure of science, to the syntax of its scientific language, such that philosophy becomes an integral part and cannot be distinguished from science; the reduction of metaphysical problems to meaningless statements, condemned by the logical syntax but explainable by the grammatical syntax of ordinary languages, and, hence the mutual dependence of metaphysics and linguistics; the reduction of most problems concerning the material content of scientific statements to syntactical questions relative to the choice of language and, hence, the elimination of a large number of pseudo-problems; the attempt to unify the language of science by a physicalisation of its statements, and, hence, the creation of an unified science covering all meaningful statements. (Rougier 1936f, 192-193)

In an effort to promote logical empiricism in France, Marcel Boll and Ernest Vuillemin had a number of short monographs by Carnap, Hahn, Frank, Neurath, Reichenbach, and Schlick published in French; Rougier appears to have been closely involved in that project.⁴⁴ In his correspondence with Schlick, Rougier had mentioned the idea of a *Société Henri Poincaré* that would emulate the *Verein Ernst Mach*.⁴⁵ Rougier tried indeed to muster around him a number of philosophically minded scientists (e.g., Maurice Fréchet, Paul Langevin or Charles Rist). For the 1935 Congress, Rougier was able to rally the support of institutions such as the *Institut d'histoire des techniques et des sciences* (the ancestor of the current *Institut d'histoire et de philosophie de sciences et des techniques*) and Abel Rey's *Centre de synthèse*, whose journal, *la Revue de synthèse*, also published papers by members of the Vienna Circle in 1935. But these efforts did not bear fruit. There never was a *Société Henri Poincaré* nor any 'school'. As I already

⁴³ *Le Monde*, October 7, 2003.

⁴⁴ See (Carnap 1933, 1934), (Frank, 1934), (Hahn 1935), (Neurath 1935), (Reichenbach 1939), (Schlick 1934, 1935) To these, one must add an introduction to logical empiricism by Ernest Vuillemin (Vuillemin 1935).

mentioned, French-speaking philosophers of science such as Gonthier (or Bachelard, for that matter) were not sympathetic to logical empiricism, which was perceived as alien in more than one sense of the word. The Circle faded away after Schlick's murder in 1936, and Rougier concentrated his efforts in the late 1930s on the promotion of liberalism. The war came soon enough with its disruptive effect; when it was over, the logical empiricists of central Europe had for the most part emigrated and, in France, some key figures were dead. Rougier's actions during the war and his later involvement in post-war French politics led to total isolation.

When he went back to Europe in 1947, Rougier was nearing 60 and his philosophical career, interrupted during the war, was already largely behind him. But Rougier resumed it, participating at *International Congress of Philosophy* in Amsterdam in 1948 (Rougier 1949). Rougier's main post-war publications are his *Traité de la connaissance* and *La métaphysique et le langage*. Taken together, they form a complete and mature statement of Rougier's epistemology. The *Traité* is a remarkable introduction to epistemology, a *summa totius logicae* that forces the admiration by its scope and clarity but whose fundamental theses were perceived at the time as out of date.⁴⁶ It is clear that Rougier had not given further reflection to epistemological issues since the 1930s. While it is clear that he kept informed, during the intervening years, about scientific developments, his knowledge of the philosophical literature is found lacking. For example, one finds references to Reichenbach's most recent work, but none to Popper's *Logik der Forschung* or to Quine's writings. So, the *Traité*, published in 1955, reads as an introduction to logical empiricism in the early 1930s. It was reviewed favourably by Victor Lenzen (Lenzen 1956), who described it as "the pinnacle of formalism, relativism and conventionalism" (Lenzen 1956, 126) but Arthur Pap wrote a lengthy, negative critical study (Pap 1956). Indeed, according to Pap,

... it is clear that [Rougier] is not sufficiently conversant with the more refined techniques of logical analysis that have developed in English and American analytic philosophy [...] His treatise, published in 1955, is not up to date as regards analytical sophistication. [...] Accordingly, the treatise under review contains more information about the work done by logical empiricists before world war II than new insights [...] Some serious inaccuracies are simply perpetuated... (Pap 1956, 149)

⁴⁵ In the letter mentioned in footnote 32, above.

⁴⁶ Needless to say, the *Traité* was totally unique in France in the 1950s. Still, it was respectfully reviewed by Gilles-Gaston Granger (Granger 1956), the future professor at the Collège de France. Among the many punctual criticisms, Granger was also pointing out the lack of any theoretical framework to cope with the social and psychological conditions for scientific change (Granger 1956, 19).

Indeed, Rougier adopted Schlick's view of the communicability of the structure of sensations, his notion of *Konstatierungen* and his strict criteria of verifiability that had all been abandoned by logical empiricists (Pap 1956, 159-162). Pap further accused Rougier of committing technical mistakes, such as confusing quantifiers with propositional functions (Pap 1956, 160n.). But Pap's main argument is against Rougier's argument in favour of conventionalism from the plurality of logics. As Pap argues, Rougier's argument is vitiated by confusion between 'sentence' and 'proposition' (Pap 1956, 154). Some of these accusations are a trifle unfair; for example, Rougier also wanted to liberalize the criterion of verifiability.⁴⁷ The accusation of having confused 'sentence' and 'proposition' stands and falls with Quine's rejection of 'propositions', so the matter is not that simple. As for the alleged confusion of quantifiers with propositional functions, it refers to Rougier's use of the Wittgenstein-Schlick interpretation of laws as *Anweisungen zur Bildung von Aussagen* or 'hypotheses' (Schlick 1979, 188), (Rougier 1955, 219); this interpretation, originates in Hermann Weyl's account of quantifiers and it was also taken up by Frank Ramsey;⁴⁸ it involves no logical howler and it is part of an elaborate anti-realist conception of the laws of physics (Rougier 1955, 218 & 407).

Pap also argued that Rougier's critique of metaphysics, which is derived from Russell, Wittgenstein and Carnap, was, in light of recent ordinary language philosophy, outdated (Pap 1956, 164-166). Rougier was, however, to publish in 1960 a book on *La métaphysique et le langage* (Rougier 1960a), in which he developed a view he had already expressed in the 1930s that natural languages possess an "erroneous grammatical syntax" that allows for the formulation of the pseudo-problems of metaphysics (Rougier 1936e, 35), i.e., they possess whole metaphysics *in nuce*. Rougier took his lead from an essay by Émile Benveniste on Greek language (Rougier 1960b, 73),⁴⁹ in which he argued that metaphysics simply originated in Greece because of an accidental feature that Greek language was the only one to possess around the Mediterranean sea in Antiquity, namely nominalization of the verb 'to be' (Benveniste 1966, 71).⁵⁰ Rougier reiterated some of his criticisms of Greek, Medieval and Modern philosophy but also added chapters on Husserl and Heidegger. Needless to say, his book had, like the *Traité*, no echo in

⁴⁷ See (Rougier 1949; 1960b, 58-59).

⁴⁸ I have discussed this last point in many places, see, e.g., (Marion 2002).

⁴⁹ And on the analyses of a French translator, who found out that German metaphysics is infected by nouns resulting from the nominalization of verbs for which German is so permissive (Siewerth 1958, 43f.).

France, it was not even noticed by Jean-François Revel, who published sarcastic criticisms of French philosophy during these years (Revel 1979).

Because of his many activities to promote logical empiricism in France, Rougier is often pictured in France as a mere promoter of the doctrines of the Vienna Circle, hence as an unoriginal and intellectually inferior thinker —French analytic philosophers are indeed often portrayed as such, as opposed to the profound, indigenous *penseurs*. His political detractors further implied that he imported a foreign philosophy in order to provide a respectable garb to reprehensible political views.⁵¹ Nothing is further from the truth. As I pointed out, Rougier's first contact with Schlick was in 1931, at a time when his philosophical outlook was almost fully developed. By 1931, Rougier had published almost all of his work in scientific philosophy and he had developed all the main theses that characterize his philosophy: his understanding of the modern axiomatic method and interpretation of Poincaré's conventionalism, and his criticism of *paralogismes, pseudo-problèmes* and *mystiques* of 'school philosophy'. So, although Rougier may be correctly pictured as rather orthodox associate of the Circle, he came to the Circle and contributed to it from an independent standpoint. Members of the Circle were perfectly aware of this. Philip Frank noticed that

Rougier started his philosophic work on a basis similar to that of Schlick. He took his start from Poincaré, tried to integrate Einstein into the "new positivism", and wrote the best all-round criticism of the school philosophy that I know of, 'The Paralogisms of rationalism'. (Frank 1949, p. 48)

Reviewing the *Traité de la connaissance*, Victor Lenzen wrote:

By dedicating his book to the memory of Moritz Schlick, M. Rougier acknowledges the contributions to his theory by the Vienna Circle. He recognizes as a decisive influence in the new developments, Wittgenstein's doctrine that the rules of logic are tautologies which are true by virtue of form alone. M. Rougier, however, has been an independent contributor to logical empiricism in his own right. An early work by him was devoted to the geometric philosophy of Henri Poincaré, whose discovery of the role of conventions in science contributed a basic element in philosophy of science. An early work of M. Rougier on the structure of deductive theories provided the outline for the present extended treatment. In *Paralogismes du rationalisme* he anticipated Carnap's *Scheinprobleme* with an unequalled wealth of examples. A work on *Scholasticism* and *Thomism* further prepared him to place the new theory of knowledge in its historical setting. (Lenzen 1956, 125)

Lenzen seems right in portraying Rougier as an "independent contributor to logical empiricism in his own right", while Frank was also right to point out that Rougier came to logical

⁵⁰ But French is, according to Rougier, a "clear and logical language" (Rougier 1960a, 188) ...

⁵¹ E.g., (Bounoure 1987).

empiricism from an independent standpoint. The latter is, of course, that of the French positivist tradition inaugurated by Auguste Comte. It is clear, for example, that Rougier's conventionalist alternative between empiricism and *a priori* rationalism is but a variant of *l'esprit positif* as defined by Comte. Indeed, Comte defined the latter in the *Discours sur l'esprit positif*, an alternative to empiricism and *mysticism*. Incidentally, this is one probable origin to Rougier's notion of '*mystique*'. Rougier's reliance on ideas taken from great figures of the positivist tradition, from Comte, Taine and Renan to Abel Rey and Lévy-Bruhl, is everywhere apparent. What is fascinating in the case of Rougier is precisely how close his positions were to logical empiricism when he first contacted Schlick in 1931. He had almost all elements in his possession in the early 1920s. As Rougier himself recognized later on, in his 'Itinéraire philosophique' (Rougier 1960b), which is still the best available introduction to his philosophy, the most important lesson he learned from the Vienna Circle was their use of Wittgenstein's notion of tautology as the linchpin in their renovation of empiricism.⁵²

Now, not only Rougier was an intellectually independent associate, his role within the Circle was not limited to that of an organizer: he also participated in their debates. When compared to central figures such as Carnap or Neurath, Rougier was of course a minor figure, an outsider without much real influence at the heart of the Circle. But his contributions are not for that reason lacking in intrinsic interest.

On some of the controversies, Rougier took sides without bringing new elements to the debate. For example, on the notorious dispute between Neurath and Schlick on truth, he was one of those, such as Waismann and von Juhos (Juhos 1935), who sided with Schlick:

One cannot describe the anatomy of science without reintroducing the classical notion of truth as one-to-one correspondence between a system of symbols and a given. [...] But, as soon as you re-establish the *notion of correspondence with a given* [...] a series of acts of thought become possible without committing the mortal sin of metaphysics. We can quietly compare the menu with what the waiter brings us on his tray or the sentences of our Baedeker with the monuments which it describes. (Rougier 1936d, 88-89)⁵³

As a matter of fact, Rougier is more often than not siding with Schlick. I have already mentioned

⁵² Incidentally, Rougier's understanding of Wittgenstein is close to the conventionalist reading of Carnap. Recall the *Logical Structure of the World*: "Logic consists solely of conventions concerning the use of symbols, and of tautologies on the basis of these conventions" (Carnap 1967, § 107). As for Rougier on Wittgenstein: "[Logic] is a set of tautologies that teaches how to remain consistent with the linguistic conventions we edict, to recognize the equivalence of different sentences in virtue of the same conventions [...]" (Rougier 1960b, 48).

⁵³ See also (Rougier 1936f, 193).

that he adopted Schlick's thesis of the communicability of the structure of sensations and the Wittgenstein-Schlick notion of 'hypotheses'. These two elements are still present in the 'Itinéraire philosophique' of 1960.⁵⁴ Clearly, Rougier belonged to the so-called "right wing" of the Circle.

Rougier's more substantial contributions to the debates within the Circle, as witnessed by his articles in *Erkenntnis*, were about physicalism (Rougier 1937/38) and the relativity of logic (Rougier 1939/40, 1940, 1941). On the second contribution, I have already cited Pap's criticisms. The first is Rougier's contribution to the debate surrounding the unity of science. The idea of the unity of science requires a *unified language of science*, in which every scientific assertion could be expressed. This language had to be both intersubjective and universal. Under the name 'physicalism', Carnap and Neurath proposed in a series of papers a 'physicalist' language as a candidate for the unified language. In 'Le langage de la physique est-il universel et autonome?', which is his contribution to the *Fourth International Congress of Scientific Philosophy* in Cambridge, Rougier rejects physicalism by providing a number of arguments to the effect that physicalist language is neither universal nor autonomous. He does not seem to have had qualms with the claim that it is intersubjective. One should note at the outset that Rougier repeated his arguments in 1955 in the *Traité de la connaissance* (Rougier 1955, 296-305) and in 1960 in his 'Itinéraire philosophique' (Rougier 1960d, 56-58). They are therefore a key feature of Rougier's philosophy, not some set of remarks quickly repudiated or simply forgotten. Rougier was anxious to point out that he was able to participate in the debates between members of the Circle and that he was his own man, and his discussion of physicalism was essential to that self-portrayal.⁵⁵

One should also ask at the outset what Rougier understood by 'physicalism'. As I see it, the term was ambiguously defined in the writings of Neurath and Carnap. Indeed, at times Neurath presented the universal language as the "language of physics" *simpliciter* (Neurath 1983, 54-55). But a language that would contain only metrical concepts would not be suited for the job and Carnap weakened the physicalist thesis and developed in *The Unity of Science* (Carnap 1995) a 'thing-language' which would contain also qualitative concepts provided that they "refer to

⁵⁴ Respectively, (Rougier 1960b, 63-65) and (Rougier 1960b, 17).

⁵⁵ In his letter to Neurath dated November 14, 1938 (in Konstanz), Rougier set out four points about which he disagreed with the "*Wiener Kreis première manière*" (as he called it in a letter dated March, 26, 1939). Briefly, these are the relativity of the analytic-synthetic distinction, the possibility of languages with domains of intersubjectivity narrower than that of the physicalist language, the relativity of the distinction between meaningful and meaningless

observable properties of things and observable relations between things” (Stegmüller 1969, 293).⁵⁶ Neurath also spoke of the unified language as a purified version of everyday language, which he identifies with the language of physics (Neurath 1983, 62 & 91). Rougier understood ‘physicalism’ as the thesis that:

... any psychological statement can be translated, in virtue of correspondence laws, into a statement of physics. (Rougier 1955, 298-299)

Therefore, Rougier’s arguments are aiming at the stronger form of ‘physicalism’, not the weaker. However, it makes no essential difference to the relevance of his arguments. This is not the place for their thorough examination.⁵⁷ I should merely point out that Rougier claimed that

... there exists no set of invariable psycho-physical laws which would relate one-to-one a given state of mind to a given group of individual or collective responses. (Rougier 1937/38, 192)

It is perhaps the case that there is no such psycho-physical laws but Rougier gives no justification for this claim. But he further argues against physicalism through an argument about the nature of explanations:

Similarly, the behaviourist can describe the behaviour of Socrates in his prison. He will find out that, although the door is open and despite his friends advice, Socrates remains seated on his bed. But if he limits himself to the following minutes: “the bones are hanging in their sockets, the relaxation and contraction of the sinew enable Socrates to bend his limbs” and to remain seated on his bed, he would not have explained Socrates’ attitude [...] He will explain it only if Socrates explains to him, in psychological language, his reasons for not taking flight. Physicalism is thus refuted in the well-known page of the *Phaedo*. (Rougier 1937/38, 193)

Reading the *Phaedo* (98b-99b) with Rougier’s eyes, it looks as if Plato is clearly pointing out that there are two irreducible modes of explanation: *explaining by citing reasons* and *causal explanations*. And Rougier makes explicit that actions can only be satisfactorily explained by citing reasons. This position effectively undermines the universality of physicalism and it is not *prima facie* implausible; it has its defenders today.⁵⁸ One alternative to Rougier’s position, which was, of course, not envisaged by him, is Davidson’s anomalous monism and his claim that “a reason is a rational cause” (Davidson 1980, 233). At any rate, Rougier did not show how an

terms, and the necessity of ordinary language in psychology and sociology (i.e., the lack of universality of the physicalist language).

⁵⁶ On this terminological matter, I relied on (Stegmüller 1969, 292-295).

⁵⁷ These arguments are discussed in my paper ‘Louis Rougier, the Vienna Circle and the Unity of Science’, to appear.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., (Gillett 1993).

analysis of reasons in terms of causes is implausible.⁵⁹ Therefore, it would be correct to say that Rougier succeeded more in stating his position than in providing a cogent argument in support of it. At least he could have simply pointed out that, from his standpoint, the onus is on the physicalist to provide a reduction of reasons to causes.

So, if Rougier's arguments are in the end not fully satisfactory, they can at least be seen as an independent and valuable, albeit not influential, contribution to a central debate of the Vienna Circle. One may ask if there are elements in Rougier's background that may explain his radically anti-physicalist stance. Surely, Rougier must have known about Auguste Comte's classification of the sciences. Comte's anti-reductionism is based on a classification of phenomena, which are ranked from the simplest to the more complex; it is claimed that there are both new qualitative elements at each new stage that are not reducible to those of lower stages and that new methods for the study of phenomena appear at each new stage (Lévy-Bruhl 1913, 90-93). There are no traces of this in Rougier's writings in the 1930s but the *Traité de la connaissance* contains a description of the universe as a "stratified reality" (Rougier 1955, 404), the study of which requires, when moving from one stratum to another requires a "complete change of logic and method" (Rougier 1955, 406). This is quite in line with Rougier's brief remarks on the distinctive nature of the methods of the social sciences (Rougier 1955, 25, 305, 406n.).

3. A *rationaliste engagé*: Constructive Liberalism

The combination of a critique of religion and a critique of metaphysics has been frequent among French left-wing intellectuals in the twentieth century; Rougier was rather unique in further combining it with a resolute right-wing stance. Rougier was always anxious to play a significant role in support of the causes he espoused, hence his tireless promotion of logical empiricism. He was the first French philosopher to produce a substantial contribution to political economy in the twentieth century, before the younger and better-known Raymond Aron.⁶⁰ This is unusual and *avant-garde* indeed for a philosopher of the *IIIe République*, since economics were not

⁵⁹ For an example of such reduction, see (Armstrong 1968, 200-204).

⁶⁰ Indeed, Aron's first paper in that field, a critique of the economic policy of the *Front populaire*, appeared in 1937 (Aron 1937), while Rougier's first paper in political economy published dates from 1920 (Rougier 1920d). By 1939, Rougier had published books such as *Les mystiques politiques et leurs incidences internationales* (Rougier 1935b) and *Les mystiques économiques. Comment l'on passe des démocraties libérales aux états totalitaires* (Rougier 1938a), along with many articles such as (Rougier 1938b) and (Rougier 1938c).

traditionally considered within the purview of philosophy. And here again, Rougier played an important historical role, a role largely obscured by the events that took place during and after World War II, as he was one of the first neo-liberal thinkers of the century. In a nutshell, by the turn of last century traditional economic liberalism, associated with the Manchester school and summarized by the famous motto, “*laissez-faire, laissez-passer*”, had become a disreputable doctrine. Doctrines of state central planning, or “*planisme*” as the Belgian Henri de Man called it, were considered as the only viable solution, not just within totalitarian states left and right but also within democracies; one may think of both Roosevelt’s *New Deal* and the French *Front populaire*. In the 1930s, however, proposals to renovate the liberal doctrine started to emerge, in the writings of the American journalist Walter Lippmann, and the European economists Lionel Robbins, Wilhelm Röpke, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek. In France, along with the economists Jacques Rueff and the younger Maurice Allais, Louis Rougier was part of this first generation of neo-liberals. He published extensively on political economy, his most remarkable book being *Les mystiques économiques. Comment l’on passe des démocraties libérales aux états totalitaires*, published in 1938 (Rougier 1938a). Rougier took part in the organization of the first international congress of neo-liberal thought in the twentieth century, the *Colloque Walter Lippmann*, which took place in Paris, in August 1938, and he edited the proceedings (Rougier 1939). In the same year, he took part with Louis Marlio and others in the foundation of the *Centre international d’études pour la rénovation du libéralisme*. Through such activities, Rougier found himself at the centre of a network, in Paris and Geneva, of industrialists, politicians, economists, and publishers whose task was to promote liberalism.⁶¹ Friends such as Marlio had links with members of the Daladier-Reynauld government which succeeded to the *Front populaire* and adopted a liberal economic agenda. Rougier thus had a chance to play an influential role, suited to his character, as some sort of advisor.

The *Centre international* was closed by the Nazis as soon as they walked into Paris in 1940 but it was to serve as a model for the well-known Mont-Pèlerin Society, which was created after the war in 1947, in Switzerland.⁶² Because of the controversy in the post-war years surrounding his involvement in Vichy, Rougier was not invited to this meeting (see section 4 below), but he

⁶¹ For a detailed study, see (Denord 2001).

⁶² Some practices of the *Centre international* were obviously not retained. For example, representatives of the unions were always invited to voice their opinion after any lecture, in order to initiate the discussion.

was elected in the 1960s, with the crucial backing of Friedrich von Hayek.

Rougier's economic and political liberalism has many points of contact with yet another Austrian school, that of the economists, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek.⁶³ It can be sketched in a few strokes, by contrasting, as he does himself (Rougier 1920b, 17, 40; 1929, 80), the declaration of human rights of 1789 with that of 1793. In a nutshell, it is the confrontation of two philosophies: the declaration of 1789, inspired from Montesquieu, emphasizes through legal equality the protection of citizens against abuses of power, while that of 1793, inspired by Rousseau, emphasizes instead the *volonté générale* and *souveraineté populaire*. These philosophies give rise, respectively, to two principles, for whose formulation I paraphrase Rougier's lecture at the *International Congress of Philosophy* in Prague (Rougier 1936a, 593):

1. The principle of the control of the acts of the governments by those governed.
2. The principle of the *sovereignty of the people*, according to which those governing receive their power from the people.

According to Rougier, these principles contradict each other (Rougier 1938a, 22; 1938b, 187). Furthermore, when the second one takes precedence over the first, it is the end of liberal democracies. In other words, the essence of Rougier's political liberalism resides in the prominence of first principle:

The abstract principle of the natural rights of man, the concrete principle of customary, historical rights, the one expression the French, the other the English version of liberalism, stipulate [...] that the sovereignty of the people has limits, that the people is sovereign but must govern constitutionally, and that if it violates the constitution, its act is an abuse of public power against which the individual can appeal to a judiciary instance which is above the people's will. (Rougier 1938b, 187-188)

This liberalism, which is in essence that of Constant and Tocqueville,

... limits state intervention through the recognition of the rights of the citizens, balances the power of the executive by legislative control and judiciary power, protects the individual against the abuses of the public power, admits the representation of minorities and the rights of the opposition... (Rougier 1938b, 181)

But Rougier argues that the *mystique* of egalitarianism forces state intervention and thus leads democracies down a slippery slope, which will result in their replacement by a totalitarian state.

⁶³ Indeed, there are many points in common with von Mises' *Human Action* (Mises 1949). Robert Nadeau cite 10 theses held by Hayek in (Nadeau 2001, 67), there is evidence that Rougier shared at least 8 of them. A proper study of the common ground between Rougier and the Austrian economists is needed.

So political and economic liberalism are intimately linked to each other: “no democracy is compatible with authoritarian state interventionism” (Rougier 1938a, 196).

Rougier’s conception of economic liberalism is fairly typical of his times.⁶⁴ He insists on the reality of market mechanisms and on the need for a proper scientific study, as opposed to the idea that one could tamper with them with impunity through authoritarian state intervention. The term ‘neo-liberalism’ is used since the 1970s to refer to the monetarist doctrine of the Chicago School and a form of ‘ultra-liberalism’. It is important to understand that, although this ‘ultra-liberalism’ is genetically related to the ‘neo-liberalism’ of the 1930s, they ought not to be confused. Rougier believed that the State should provide a legal framework that would insure the proper functioning of the market (Rougier 1938a, 85). This is why he was in favour of anti-trust laws (Rougier 1938a, 81f.). (The insistence on the legal framework is also typical of an era in which in French universities economics was still mostly thought in law faculties.) For the same reasons, Rougier was also in favour high taxes on inheritance and redistribution through progressive income taxes, as he naively believed that in an “open economy” conditions tend to become equal through a “reinforcement of the middle classes, which absorb the vast mass of the proletariat and the abusive class of major capitalists” (Rougier 1938a, 87). “A liberal economy thus implies a certain form of state intervention” (Rougier 1938a, 84); this is why Rougier called his position “constructive liberalism”. This being said, Rougier was not certainly a social democrat; he was an advocate of fiscal responsibility and he saw the welfare state as the first step towards the destruction of liberal democracies⁶⁵ and he denounced what he called the “tyranny of unions” (Rougier 1938b, 184).

It is not easy to apply René Rémond’s well-known categories, ‘legitimism’, ‘Orleanism’, and ‘Bonapartism’,⁶⁶ to Rougier. He surely stood within a French liberal tradition, which goes back to Montesquieu, Constant, Guizot and Tocqueville. He thus shares his liberalism with the *Monarchie de Juillet* and *Orleanism*. This would also explain Rougier’s opposition to de Gaulle, whose anti-parliamentarian and nationalistic tendencies are those of a typically *Bonapartist*

⁶⁴ The only study is (Lecoq 1989).

⁶⁵ See, for example, Rougier’s discussion of the case of Switzerland in (Rougier 1938b, 184-186), on the basis of (Rappart 1936). Rappart had invited Rougier at the *Institut universitaire des hautes études internationales* in Geneva, one of the first neo-liberal institutions.

⁶⁶ See the *locus classicus* (Rémond 1982).

figure, as Rémond pointed out (Rémond 1982, 322-333).⁶⁷ But there is no real equivalent in Rougier of the *Orleanist* emphasis on the ‘governing elites’, although he wrote early on about the need “to select an elite [...] and to put it in power so that it serves the public good” (Rougier 1920b, 52). Rougier was also very much taken by Vilfredo Pareto’s theses on the free circulation of elite; he dedicated *La mystique démocratique* to Pareto, whose ‘objectivity’ he also admired. But this free circulation meant for Rougier recruitment “open to all” and on merit only, there should no restriction to aristocracy, nor any ‘plutocracy’ (Rougier 1920b, 53; 1929, 236). There is no hint in his Rougier’s writings of any approbation of suffrage on the basis of property qualification (*suffrage censitaire*), a feature of *Orleanism*. Rougier could not accept either the idea, fashionable in some circles close to him, of a ‘technocracy’, i.e., of government by an elite of social engineers, as envisaged by Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte (Rougier 1938a, 197-215). It is important that this be pointed out, since some *technocrates* were involved in the later stages of the Vichy regime.

Moreover, Rougier has a perfectly idiosyncratic definition of the ‘elites’. In *La mystique démocratique*, the ‘elites’ that are to be recruited are *artists* and *scientists* (Rougier 1929, 259), because they will provide for, using Ferrero’s expression, a ‘qualitative’ civilization (Ferrero 1917). Rougier even described this elite, to which he identified himself, as “idle, useless squanderers” (Rougier 1929, 254).⁶⁸ More like a poet’s vision than that of a fascist. On another note, there are also points of contact between Rougier’s elitism and Ortega y Gasset’s aristocratic liberalism of *The Revolt of the Masses* (Ortega y Gasset 1985). One finds traces of Ortega y Gasset in Rougier’s writings such as *Les mystiques économiques* (Rougier 1938a, 24f.) or ‘Retour au libéralisme’ (Rougier 1938b, 188f.), where Rougier even uses the expression ‘revolt of the masses’ and lists Ortega y Gasset among the “wise men of the West”, along with Russell, Huxley and Ferrero (Rougier 1938a, 31; 1938b, 195). It is usually recognized today that ‘democratic’ and ‘elite’ theories do not necessarily conflict⁶⁹ and there is no need to construe Rougier’s elitism as being of a necessarily anti-democratic nature; on the contrary, Rougier attempted a conciliation,

⁶⁷ For Rougier’s political opposition to de Gaulle, see (Rougier 1945a, 1947a, 1947b, 1948a). There are many reasons for Rougier’s spiteful attitude towards de Gaulle, only one of which is his belief that de Gaulle was authoritarian and anti-parliamentarian. For an early, clear statement, see (Rougier 1945a, 238-239); for a later statement, during a lecture to the Mont-Pèlerin society in 1961, see (Rougier 1967, 5), where de Gaulle is listed alongside Napoleon, Napoleon III and ... Vichy.

⁶⁸ See also (Rougier 1929, 242f.).

along lines not dissimilar to Pareto's.

Rougier's constitutional thinking remained unclear in his pre-war writings. In *La mystique démocratique*, where one finds ambiguous comments about the legitimacy of a system based merely on universal suffrage, Rougier was clearly voicing doubts of a liberal nature against a system where there is no check on the executive power and there are vague suggestions a bicameral system, where the second chamber would be constituted by representatives of the various bodies of the society, unions, corporations, etc. This sort of constitutional thinking was, however, given precise content by jurists.⁷⁰ After the war, Rougier wrote at length on the sources of France's constitutional malaise, which is easily seen when one contrasts the history of its political institutions with the steady and uninterrupted development of democracy on the other side of the Channel. This malaise, furthered by the malfunctioning of the institutions of the *IVe République*, he described as "ideological" (Rougier 1948b, 21) and linked to the mistaken 1793 approach to democracy that he had criticized over and over in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷¹ Rougier's political and constitutional writings after the war thus contain an indictment of the tradition French political thinking as a whole, for having failed to live up to the liberal ideals of the 1789 charter of human rights; he was pointing out as a culprit a deep-seated ideological bias in need of uprooting. This message was, of course, not heard. The absence of any check on the legislative power was aggravated in his eyes by the fact an all powerful parliament voted laws that violated basic rights, such as the introduction of the *indignité nationale*, which did not respect the fundamental principle of *nullum crimen sine lege* by introducing retroactively a new crime (Rougier 1950, 78-80). Rougier also made some more specific constitutional proposals for France: he suggested that it adopts a presidential system close to that of the United States and insisted on the need of the equivalent of a Supreme Court (Rougier 1963b), or at least an increase in the powers of the *Conseil d'état* (Rougier 1948b, 25). Needless to say, such proposals did not go down well in a country known for its *anti-américanisme*.⁷²

Rougier was always a resolute anti-communist and his main argument was of an empirical nature: experience has shown that it is a failure. (Rougier also sided with the Austrians in the

⁶⁹ See, e.g., (Bachrach 1967).

⁷⁰ See, e.g., the unpeachable (Hauriou 1923), quoted in (Rougier 1929, 261).

⁷¹ See (Rougier 1948b) for Rougier's historical analyses.

⁷² For a sympathetic account from a reputed constitutionalist, who nevertheless disagrees, see (Vedel 1952).

debate on the impossibility of socialist calculation.) Rougier had been in 1932 on a mission to the Soviet Union sponsored by the minister of Education, Anatole de Monzie (who was, incidentally, also the minister responsible for the *Encyclopédie française*). Rougier, who was not prone to illusions in these matters, published a lucid account, *Peut-on savoir la vérité sur l'expérience soviétique?* (Rougier 1937), which placed him alongside better known *visiteurs* such as Gide and Céline, in a minority of dissidents.⁷³ Rougier derived the view that no matter 'generous' the ends of socialism, the means deployed (central planning, etc.) will insure that they will never obtain. He used the image of the man having lost a number of bets, who does not point at his *martingale* but thinks instead that he has not applied it properly. For Rougier, central planning and egalitarianism were simply not the proper winning formula. On the other hand, Rougier argues, it is necessary for the survival of market economy that the standard of living always increases, so that new markets and business opportunities should always arise (Rougier 1929, 58 & 258).

This pragmatic argument in favour of economic liberalism and the appropriate democratic institutions fits well with Rougier's thoughts on the legitimacy of power in *La mystique démocratique, ses origines, ses illusions* (Rougier 1929). In that book, Rougier developed what could reasonably be seen as the political philosophy of the early Vienna Circle. According to Rougier, the legitimacy of *any* form of power, including democracy, is merely based on belief in what he called "*mystiques*".⁷⁴ These "*mystiques*" are nothing but the nonsensical propositions of rationalist metaphysics, dangerous ones because they are adhered to on a quasi-religious, fanatical fervour. So no form of power can be justified on *a priori* grounds; democratic *conventions*, however, are suggested from and to be preferred on *pragmatic* grounds, because properly democratic institutions allow for the freedom necessary for market economy, which is in turn claimed to be the only system empirically proven to bring about an improvement in the living standards. The egalitarian *mystique*, on the other hand, is portrayed as leading to state intervention and to the ultimate disappearance of democracy and civil rights, with no improvements in standards of living in exchange.⁷⁵

⁷³ See also the interview reported in (Kupferman 1979, 90-93).

⁷⁴ Rougier's thoughts on power should be compared to those of his friend Guglielmo Ferrero, who believed that fear is at the foundation of all principles of legitimacy (Ferrero 1942).

⁷⁵ So Rougier is unique in having derived from a logical empiricist epistemology a political philosophy which is closer to that von Mises and von Hayek than to that of, say, Neurath, who his generally recognized as having drawn the proper political inferences of the Circle. I should add to this that correspondence shows that in the 1930s Frank,

It is a well-known fact that fascism recruited more among anti-Communists than within those disenchanted with liberalism. In light of Rougier's involvement with Vichy, one may wonder if he was a fascist of sorts. I think that one must answer by the negative. It is true that some of the passages of the introduction to *Les paralogisme du rationalisme* and of *La mystique démocratique* are ambiguous, and may mislead when read out of context. For example, one reads in *La mystique démocratique*:

[...] the formula of the "corporate state" may be the solution of the future, perhaps in need of refining, but as legitimate and viable as parliamentary democracy. (Rougier 1929, 14)

But the whole point of the book, as made clear from the context, is precisely to warn against such alternatives, which constitute a real danger to democracy. The fundamental point of the book is the distinction between the 'democratic doctrine' and the 'democratic mystique'. One can very well adhere to the first and reject the second:

The democratic doctrine, understood as a political theory, is based on the belief that those that are governed know better their own needs than the rulers could even pretend to; it leads to the idea that the governmental powers are constituted as a public services exercised by representatives of the people that are accountable to it. The democratic mystique is based on the idea of "natural equality" of all humans, in virtue of which they would have the same rights and the same abilities, which leads to collectivism and, since collectivism cannot be realized, to its practical ersatz, state socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Between the first conception and the second, there is an abyss and one can very well, on matters of principle, rally the first, which leaves room for a variety of solutions to its implementation, and reject the second as utopian and subversive. (Rougier 1929, 13)

It is clear that Rougier had qualms about means to implement the 'democratic doctrine' because he feared above all a peculiar implementation, with the elimination of the first of the above principles, which would also be an implementation of the 'democratic mystique'; it would lead to state socialism. But, like Pareto, Rougier believed that some democracies had become 'plutocracies', where the rich control the politicians and that this was also unacceptable, in particular because it is an obstacle to the free circulation of elites; *La mystique démocratique* is thus not mere anti-socialism. The point of the book is therefore critically to discuss means to implement the 'democratic doctrine' not to undermine it. One may disagree with Rougier's conclusions, but it is a trifle unfair to see them as anti-democratic. At any rate, even if it were granted that some negative remarks in the writings from the 1920s are open to such an

Neurath, Reichenbach, and Schlick knew very well Rougier's political philosophy and showed much open-mindedness towards it. There is no hint of animosity, including from Rougier, whose cordial tone never betrays any lack of respect for those, like Frank, Neurath and Reichenbach, whose socialist political opinions he did not share.

interpretation, where Rougier seems to be throwing away the baby (democracy *simpliciter*) with the bath-water (the ‘democratic mystique’), the writings of the 1930s are not ambiguous in the least and the liberal message is as clear as possible. Rougier objected to the idea that liberalism is an idea of the past that was shown to have been a failure and that state planning was the solution of the future. To the false dilemma, which was widely agreed upon in the 1930s, that corporatism and socialism were the only viable alternatives, Rougier constantly opposed his conception of liberal democracy (Rougier 1938a, *passim*; 1938b, 180-181; 1938c, 711). Among the numerous passages, I shall merely quote the conclusion to *Les mystiques politiques et leurs incidences internationales*, from 1935:

The only remedy to the illnesses of our times, as we risk witnessing the apocalyptic sinking of that miraculous success, the European civilization, is to go back to the practices of political, economical and cultural liberalism, within a constructive internationalism. Statesmen must get used to think in terms of a continent or, better, at the planetary level, like physicists had to think in terms of light-years to understand the cosmological structure of the world. We must [...] accommodate our sensibility [...] to that double reality to which every new day brings a direct proof or a *reductio ad absurdum*: that of the progress of science, which must result, not in the artificial creation of economic malthusianism and unemployment to the benefit of a small feodality protected by the State, but in the continuous decrease of prices to the profit of the greatest number, and that of the increasing interdependence of the nations in what Valéry called the new era of the finite world. In this respect, nationalism and racism reveal, in those who so boisterously proclaim it, not a mentality open to the future but a mentality entirely turned towards the past. Let us take the risk and say that the *Duce* and the *Führer* are not constructing the future; at best one may say that, by the reaction that they will provoke, they had been the caretakers of the past. Between liberty and constraint, between constructive liberalism within the framework of the interdependence of the nations and the oppressive State within that of the Nation or the Race, there is no other solution. But time is running out. The fateful writing is already on the wall. (Quoted in (Allais 1990, 18-19).)

It is also true that in his constitutional thinking, Rougier favoured a bicameral system in which the second chamber would be formed by representatives of sectors of the society such as the corporations but this was not corporatism as understood in countries such as Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, or Dolfuss’ Austria. Indeed, being a liberal in economical matters, Rougier was firmly against any form of economic corporatism, which he clearly saw to be nothing but another form of state intervention and a negation of liberal principles. His criticism of corporatism is as severe as his criticism of Soviet Union (Rougier 1938a, 111-135); as a matter of fact, he even served his reader a slippery slope argument, according to which corporatism would ultimately lead to a form of collectivism not far from that of Soviet Union (Rougier 1938a, 135).

Rougier was at any rate never perceived in the 1930s as an advocate of corporatism, on the contrary. Gaetan Pirou, one of the foremost French economists at the time, may have wondered what sort of practical consequences one could derive from *Les mystiques économiques*, he

nevertheless thought that Rougier was *too liberal*, because he limited state intervention to the establishment of a legal framework, such as anti-trust legislation, that would insure that there would be no hindrance to the market mechanisms (Pirou 1938, 1106). The testimony of Jacques Rueff, arguably the greatest French economist of that period, leaves no room to doubt:

Your beautiful book on the “economic mystiques” is entirely devoted to the defence and illustration of liberal political economy, therefore to the critique of totalitarian mystiques. The system that you defend is thus exactly the opposite from the national-socialist system. It is also as distant as possible from the economic and social statutes imposed in France by Vichy. [...] I have known you for twenty years and all the conversations I had with you, all the lectures I have heard from you and all the articles I have read from you have convinced me that you are fundamentally a liberal —probably the most liberal of all our philosophers— therefore the most distant from planning and totalitarian mystiques. (Allais 1990, 36)⁷⁶

Neither was Rougier an anti-Semite.⁷⁷ Two of his three wives were Jewish.⁷⁸ He was active in a committee, the *Comité de défense des israélites*, through which he was able to help Lucy, her family and her friends, but also academics such as Alfred Schütz.⁷⁹ As far as Rougier’s writings are concerned, it is true that *La mystique démocratique* contains an argument to the effect that the egalitarianism, which vitiates, according to him, some conceptions of democracy has its source in Jewish thought and the ‘prophets of Israel’. This might be interpreted as implying anti-Semitism. However, this section of the book is but the reprint of an earlier paper, which contains only one footnote, which reads:

One should see nothing in what follows that looks like anti-Semitism. These are merely considerations of an historical nature. (Rougier 1927, 343n.)

At any rate, Rougier further argues in *La mystique démocratique* that the Protestant spirit, which he obviously approves of, also has its source in Jewish thought (Rougier 1929, 224f.). Rougier even defended during the war Renan against the accusation of anti-Semitism; as is the

⁷⁶ Rougier’s actions also speak for themselves. Through his contacts, he helped Guglielmo Ferrero, a well-known anti-Fascist who became a friend, to flee Italy in 1929 (Rougier 1947a, 91-107). According to Alain de Benoist, Rougier was also involved in 1934, through Ernst Jung, in a plot to overthrow the Nazi regime. Rougier had obtained the diplomatic support of the French government through the diplomat Alexis Léger (whose *nom de plume* was Saint John Perse), but the plot was foiled and Jung was executed in the purge that followed the night of the long knives (Benoist 1983, xxii). I do not know of the existence of any documents corroborating de Benoist’s account. Now Jung, like Ferrero, was not exactly left-wing but they were anti-fascists.

⁷⁷ Rougier was described, after his death, as an anti-Semite (Bounoure 1987, 168). It is true that one finds distasteful remarks in his correspondence, e.g., the remark quoted above on Brunschvicg as ‘the great rabbi’, but Bounoure had no access to these so his accusation was just gratuitous. In claiming that Rougier was not an anti-Semite, I am not ignoring published remarks, which one can glean here and there, that seem to betray a racist bend. I have already quoted some, one could add (Rougier 1974, 63). These do not add up to a convincing case, unless one dilutes the concepts of ‘racism’ and ‘anti-Semitism’.

⁷⁸ His first wife, Annette Falk, was also Jewish.

case with the above footnote. This defence of Renan would be totally out of character and would be nonsense if Rougier had been an anti-Semite.⁸⁰

As I shall point out in the next section, Rougier's actions and writings during the war can be seen to be in support of only one cause, the supplying of food (powdered milk) to the French *zone libre* against what he called, using an expression taken from Renan (Renan 1990, 199), Hitler's "zoological war" (Rougier 1945b, 244-246), i.e., the plan to starve entire nations to weaken them and make 'vital space' for the German Reich. In a chapter of *Créance morale de la France*, he used Renan's anti-racist stance in his famous letter to David Strauss (Renan 1990, 187-209) in order to criticize Hitler's racist doctrine (Rougier 1945b, 267-282);⁸¹ he condemned elsewhere the *révolution nationale* and the racial laws of Vichy (Rougier 1945a, 27).⁸²

On the other hand, Renan has been famously described by Nolte as a source for French 'fascist' thinking, in particular for Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, and *L'action française* (Nolte 1966, 37-47). For my part, I tend to agree with René Rémond's opinion that the use of the epithet 'fascist' brings here more confusion than it sheds light on the nature of French right-wing politics (Rémond 1982, chap. x). At any rate, Rougier was always critical of *L'action française*;⁸³ after all, he never had a monarchist or a Catholic bone in him. He considered Maurras' programme a mere "speculation for the use dilettantish intellectuals" (Rougier 1927, 322); clearly a threat to democracy but not a serious one.

Rougier always wished to play a significant role not merely to remain withdrawn in an ivory tower. This desire was already evident from his tireless promotion of lost causes such as logical empiricism and neo-liberalism. He believed that by bringing his own lucidity to bear on the political problems of the day, he could make his own contribution:

Scientific method in philosophy implies a whole lifestyle: the habit of basing one's convictions on observations and reasoning that are as impersonal as could possibly be: the exact contrary of the doctrine of '*l'engagement*' conceived of as a gratuitous act. Only this habit can bring about agreement between individuals, reduce fanaticism, bring about a greater capacity for sympathy and mutual understanding. (Rougier 1963a, 127-128)

⁷⁹ I owe this information to Claudia Berndt.

⁸⁰ In a polemic with the Swiss *homme de lettres* Auguste Viatte, in the pages of the Montreal newspaper *Le Devoir*, on January 31 and February 10, 1945.

⁸¹ That Rougier did not mention the holocaust in this chapter cannot be seen as proof that he was an anti-Semite (Bounoure 1987, 168), unless one commits a particularly crass fallacy.

⁸² There is also a critical remark in the *International Congress of Philosophy* in Prague, in 1934, against the condemnation in Germany of relativity theory as "Jewish" (Rougier 1936a, 597).

⁸³ See, e.g., (Rougier 1927, 322), (Rougier 1929, 34f.) or, when criticizing corporatism, (Rougier 1938a, 116f.).

This post-war statement naturally reflects the very spirit of the *First international Congress of Scientific Philosophy* that he had organized in 1935; Rougier's opening lecture ended with these words:

It is with this spirit of maximal tolerance that we wish to conduct our peaceful discussions. You can be assured that any doctrine will find here its devil's advocate. Nothing is more desirable than that. Progress always comes from the conflict of hypotheses, discovery is always the work of an heretic. Logical empiricism can only gain from this vast debate and can only come out of it the better. The best way to collaborate internationally is to discuss freely and to adopt the old formula that could serve as the epigraph to our Congress: *amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*. (Rougier 1936c, 9)

These words find an echo in Russell's remark that in the discussions in Paris, he

... did not discover any of the signs of unfounded and merely passionate belief which, hitherto, has been as common among philosophers as among other men. (Russell 1936, 10)

To associate freedom in discussions with objectivity was certainly Rougier's reaction, as it was that of Russell and of the members of the Vienna Circle, to political events and the mounting international crisis. With hindsight, it may be seen as naïve but this principled stance forces admiration. For Rougier, the task was promotion of liberalism against all totalitarian ideologies, left and right. In the opening lecture to the *Colloque Walter Lippmann*, he wrote:

To be a scholar who does not betray is not to be quits when one has completed one's academic duties, one's scholarly and professorial duties. It is to take part in the troubles of the day, it is to throw oneself in the battle in order to fight with the arms of the mind; it is to militate in favour of, to fight for the safeguard and renovation of the only economical and political system compatible with spiritual life, human dignity, the common good, peace between nations and the progress of civilization: liberalism. (Quoted in Allais 1990, 21)

Events were to catch up with Rougier. He had begun to play some (minor) political role behind the scene in the Daladier-Reynauld government. In the summer of 1940, when Pétain was asked to take over and when the *IIIe République* was shamefully scuttled by its own politicians, many of these joined the new state being set up in Vichy. Rougier followed his political acquaintances, hoping to continue playing his role as advisor. His involvement with Vichy was to prove his downfall, it was to cause irreparable damage to his reputation.

4. *Faut-il rougir de Rougier?*⁸⁴

Rougier's actions during the war and its aftermath are a delicate topic: mere mention of his name

⁸⁴ Thanks to Pascal Engel for the play on words.

usually evokes Vichy and the spectres of *collaboration* and anti-Semitism. For that reason, there is a *conspiration du silence* surrounding his name. Like his illustrious predecessors in the French liberal tradition, Constant and Guizot, Rougier is currently spending time in the purgatory because of his involvement in politics.⁸⁵ As far as the history of ideas is concerned, however, intellectual probity requires that this role be recognized fully, irrespectively of one's political views. Constant's and Guizot's time in the purgatory have only recently ended, in the 1980s, so what about Rougier's? Do we also have to wait another one hundred years? This is a delicate matter since in France the Vichy era is still a controversial issue where emotions are still likely to blur judgement.⁸⁶ I believe, however, that the best course of action is to provide enough information so that readers form their own judgement. I must insist that what follows should in no circumstance be understood as a whitewash of Rougier's actions or as supportive of his beliefs, which I do not share at all.

First of all, one must answer the question: What did Rougier do during the war?⁸⁷ When the German occupied Paris, they immediately closed the *Centre international d'études pour la rénovation du libéralisme* that he helped founding. Rougier drove (with Roger Martin du Gard) to Vichy in early July. Letters of that period to Lucy, who was in New York, show that Rougier was eager to fulfil his patriotic duties but he hesitated in between joining de Gaulle in London, in the hope of becoming a political advisor, and joining the Vichy government. He lucidly saw that Pétain and his entourage would have no future after the war but chose them because he did not want to lose credibility by becoming a deserter, if he were to join de Gaulle. Moreover, he was hoping that he would find some pretext to obtain from Vichy leave to go abroad and join Lucy.⁸⁸ So Rougier, knew some of the politicians involved in early Vichy and took part in the political intrigues. He apparently played a role in Pétain's decision, against the wishes of Marcel Déat, not

⁸⁵ Constant's dealing with Napoleon were flogged to death by his critics and so was Guizot's involvement in the *Monarchie de juillet*, especially his decision to throw Marx in jail.

⁸⁶ On the continued inability of the French to cope adequately with the heritage of Vichy, see (Rouso 1987).

⁸⁷ Rougier published an account of his actions before the end of the war, in Montréal: *Les accords Pétain-Churchill. Histoire d'une mission secrète* (Rougier 1945). The significance of his meeting with Churchill is still a very controversial issue, for reasons to be explained below. In the 1950s, he was roundly criticized by Gaullist historians; see, e.g., (Michel 1956) or (Schmitt 1957), when it was a political imperative to deny the existence of a *double jeu* by Pétain (a façade of collaboration with the Germans coupled with secret deals with the Allies). For more recent historical work on the mission and its implication, see (Delpla 1996), (Frank 1992) and (Krautkrämmer 1998).

⁸⁸ I owe the information since the beginning of the paragraph to Claudia Berndt, who has found the relevant, crucial letters.

to create a French *parti unique*.⁸⁹ I also mentioned Rougier's role in saving Ludwig von Mises, along with a group of Jews that had been arrested while trying to reach Spain from Switzerland by bus. There is obviously a lot more to discover about Rougier's actions in Vichy.

After the disaster at Mers-el-Kébir, Rougier used his acquaintance with Lionel Robbins to obtain an audience with Halifax and Churchill, in the hope of resuming Anglo-French relations, behind Laval's back. Rougier met Churchill in London on October 24 and 26, 1940; at the same time as the infamous meeting at Montoire between Hitler and Pétain, where the latter used for the first time the word "*collaboration*". Rougier and Churchill discussed a number of pressing issues and drafted a document, the precise nature of which is still to this day the topic of heated controversy. I shall not go into the details but I should at least mention that one point discussed was a relaxation of the English naval blockade in order to allow for the re-supplying of France from its North-African colonies.

Through the help of friends such as von Mises and Charles Morris (who wrote a letter of support citing Rougier's public stance in favour of liberalism as life-threatening if he were to stay in France), Rougier obtained a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, which would provide him with a position at the *New School of Social Research* in New York and the chance, much sought after, to join Lucy. After reporting first to Weygand in North Africa and then to Pétain in Vichy, Rougier left in early December for the United States *via* Lisbon. He was to return to France only in 1947.

In New York,⁹⁰ Rougier refused to join Gaullist organizations and entered in a number of personal disputes; he was eventually excluded from the *École libre des hautes études* that French academics had set up within the *New School*. It seems, from his writings and actions, that Rougier's sole political preoccupation was, in line with the relaxation of the blockade discussed with the British authorities, an humanitarian cause, that of feeding children in the *zone libre* by sending supplies of powdered milk, and to increase the size of Red Cross parcels to French prisoners of war in Germany. This cause was vehemently opposed by de Gaulle supporters such as Ève Curie, who believed that these supplies would necessarily end up in the hands of the Germans and contribute to their war effort. One should note the single-mindedness of Rougier's

⁸⁹ At least so he claims (Rougier 1945, 91-97), but historians seem not to doubt his word on this.

⁹⁰ On Rougier's activities in New York, see (Mehlmann 2000), chapter 7, 'Louis Rougier and the "Pétain-Churchill Agreement"'.

purpose, who was clearly reacting against what he perceived as the threat of a “zoological war”, and further notice that this humanitarian cause was also that for which Simone Weil died from malnutrition, as she apparently refused to eat more than her starving compatriots.⁹¹ Incidentally, Rougier was a close friend of Simone Weil, as well as her brother André.⁹²

In light of what has just been said, one may wonder exactly why he was a victim of political ‘cleansing’ after the war. After all, all he really did was to play a role in the diplomatic relations between Vichy and the British government; his role may have been rather insignificant, it remains that the cause here was collaboration with the Allies, not with the Germans. (Unless, of course, any dealing with Vichy is equated with collaboration with the Germans.) Moreover, it took place at an early stage, when the Vichy regime had not shown yet its true nature (after all that the meetings took place at the time of Montoire) and that the majority of the French naturally supported it. And there is evidence that Pétain considered Rougier to be *un espion anglais*...

In 1948, therefore some time after returning to France, Rougier had to face two *commissions d’enquête* of the Ministry of Education. The first *commission* cleared him of all charges. But he was not to get away with it and a second *commission* was set up, which found him guilty on two counts.⁹³ These are worth stating, since these are to only ‘crimes’ for which Rougier was ever found guilty and on which his reputation as a Pétain supporter and ‘collaborator’ is entirely founded: first, he was that “he tried without mandate to intervene in diplomatic discussions, running the risk, through indiscreet pressure, of obstructing the Allied war effort”. The only evidence cited against him on this count is a letter to Churchill in December 1941 and a letter from Halifax dated December 1942. Secondly, Rougier was found guilty of having defended the foreign policy of Vichy during his stay in New York and of having unjustly criticized that of the *Comité Français de Libération Nationale*, thus “helping the enemy and obstructing France’s war effort”. This time, the evidence cited was a telegram and a paper published in the journal *Pour la victoire* in 1944. The substance of the disagreement, and the content of the article in *Pour la victoire* is precisely the humanitarian cause already mentioned.

⁹¹ See (Pétrement 1973, 517).

⁹² Little is known, alas, but there is some evidence of that friendship in Simone Pétrement’s biography of Simone Weil; there is in particular an allusion to a conversation between Simone Weil and Rougier before his departure for London (Pétrement 1973, p. 274).

⁹³ Rougier’s dossier is to be found in the *Archives de l’Éducation Nationale*, some documents are also found in Lourmarin.

Clearly, something is amiss here. To say the least, it is hard to believe that someone could have been indicted for “running the risk of obstructing the war effort” (*risquer de gêner l’effort de guerre*). As the reputed jurist George Vedel wrote, “Is there a museum for that sort of thing?” (Vedel 1952, 2). Furthermore, the second count seems like a mere *délit d’opinion*, hardly a crime under any circumstances. How could this be explained? The two *commissions d’enquête* were part of the *épuration* —literally: ‘cleansing’— which took place after the *Libération* in 1944 — incidentally, 1948 was a rather suspiciously late date for the opening of a new case. *L’épuration* was necessary but historians agree that it was in some ways a botched affair.⁹⁴ For example, the introduction of the retroactive crime of *indignité nationale* violated a fundamental principle of jurisprudence, the *nullum crimen sine lege*; privately voiced opinions were considered a punishable crime, etc. The sheer magnitude of the task and the lack of means (after all, even the justice system had also to be ‘cleansed’), also led to the practical solution of the innumerable *commissions d’enquête* presided by respectable citizens with no legal background. The president of the *commission* that condemned Rougier, Maurice Crouzet, was a university professor of classical studies. This may explain the legal absurdities.

The second indictment refers to Rougier’s dealings with the French community in New York and the humanitarian cause that he espoused. It is clear that the French expatriates in New York divided and in perpetual quarrel; this led to literally thousands of accusations of *espionage* made during those years, of which none were apparently retained by the FBI (Mehlmann 2000, 143). The fate of Henri de Kérillis, one of the first to rally de Gaulle and the editor of *Pour la victoire*, is rather telling. He apparently became an enemy of the Free French when he refused to reproduce in *Pour la victoire* an unfairly anti-American article from London’s Gaullist newspaper, *La Marseillaise*. The article claimed that the American occupation of French North Africa was a worse dishonour to France than the German occupation of French soil...⁹⁵

This pathetic attitude on the part of the French expatriates was not confined to New York. The French philosopher Jean Cavallès, became a martyr of French resistance in 1944. He was by then in London but took the fateful decision to go back to France. The reasons for this decision, as told by his sister, Gabrielle Ferrières, are stunning:

⁹⁴ See (Novick 1968) for an authoritative and balanced treatment of the subject.

⁹⁵ See (Kérillis 1946) and (Mehlmann 2000, 134-135) for an account of this incident.

He left without much illusion about French circles in London. But this contact with free France disappointed him rapidly. The superficial chatter —this “émigré mentality” about which he spoke to me with contempt— the “cliquishness” of the whole of this Gaullist clan, “these women who were wearing *croix de Lorraine* on their hats”, and especially the calculations, the ambitions —the petty politics that resulted in the Comité d’Alger— scandalized the soldier that he was. [...] Disgusted by the political orientation of the *résistance*, he wanted entirely to devote himself to action. (Ferrières 2003, 205)

I would not wish want for a minute to compare Rougier and Cavaillès. This would be ignoble. A comparison with Rougier would be demeaning to Cavaillès who, like François Cuzin, gave his life for his country. But Cavaillès’ reaction to the émigré mentality shows precisely that a reaction such as Rougier’s is not necessarily that of a Pétain follower. Simply to equate criticism of Gaullist organizations with sympathy towards Vichy is to reason fallaciously.

Rougier actually became a *persona non grata* because he did not want to join the *Comité Français de Libération Nationale* and this was a pre-requisite for admission in the *École libre des hautes études*. Rougier had protested in vain against the blatant violation of academic freedom. As a matter of fact, the *École libre* was so openly political that at one point the American authorities wanted it to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act and this request caused an internal fracas which ultimately led to the resignation of Jacques Maritain and the ousting of Alexandre Koyré, because they opposed breaches of academic neutrality (Mehlmann 2000, 133). As for the humanitarian cause, it is a controversial matter: would the supplying of powdered milk to the *zone libre* really amount to an indirect supplying of Germany? Was it worth letting the French children starve? These are historical questions that I cannot answer and I should merely say that it is hard to believe that Rougier’s intention was to contribute to the German war effort.

It seems, therefore, as if Rougier was made to pay a heavy price for merely having shown independence of mind in times of intransigence and in a world of cliques and political jockeying. Why? To my mind, the answer lies in what happened in the late stages of the war. In December 1940, Laval was ousted from the Pétain government and Pierre-Étienne Flandin, a politician of the *IIIe République* with somewhat moderate views, took the reins at the Foreign Affairs. He was to be dismissed a few months later. Realizing that he had no political clout in Vichy, Flandin left for North Africa, where he was arrested in 1943, after the Allies invaded. Flandin was later tried and defended his actions by claiming that he had agreed to take the job only when Pétain had showed him documents that proved that there were discussions with the British. In absence of any supporting evidence nobody believed him and the British publicly denied having made any deal with Pétain. The whole matter was reported in the *New York Times*

and Rougier, still in New York, took Flandin's defence by pointing out his own role, about which he had remained quiet, in a strange debate between his and His Majesty's government in the pages of the New York Times. Rougier further published in Montreal, in March 1945, a full account, *Les accords Pétain-Churchill. Histoire d'une mission secrète*, with the reproduction of some documents at the end. In the end the British government admitted the existence of meetings with Rougier but denied having reached any 'gentlemen's agreement' with Pétain.

The publication of *Les accords Pétain-Churchill* was a total disaster for Rougier. It threw him right in the middle of the war between Pétain supporters and the *résistants*. Rougier was providing tangible evidence to the effect that Pétain had played a "*double jeu*", i.e., that he pretended to collaborate with the Germans only in order to prepare the return of France into the war alongside the Allies. When Pétain supporters were put under trial, this *double jeu* was a frequent form of defence—including by Pétain himself—and it was imperative for the accusers to deny the validity of that argument, i.e., to deny that there had been a *double jeu* so to affirm that the Pétain regime was truly collaborationist. Rougier's mission was part of a series of meetings between French and British representatives, involving at first the ambassadors in Madrid, Samuel Hoare and La Baume, and after Rougier's meeting with Halifax and Churchill, the Canadian diplomat Pierre Dupuy⁹⁶ and the (Catholic and Bergsonian) philosopher Jacques Chevalier — who got 20 years of forced labour for his involvement in Vichy as Minister of Education. These talks were over by 1941. To my mind, it is clear that these meetings ended because Pétain stopped them and without any recognition by both parties that an 'agreement' had actually been reached. Therefore thesis of the *double jeu* does not hold water.

Moreover, the evidence provided by Rougier was incomplete and ambiguous. The main document, the so-called 'gentlemen's agreement' could very well have been written to the attention of Weygand in North Africa, as the British wanted to get him to break with Vichy and join their side. This would explain Rougier's visit to Weygand prior to his return to Vichy as well as a number of other points. More damning, Rougier appears to have tampered with the documents, by smudging ink over the last word of the title of the document: "Entretien avec...". Rougier claimed that the word was 'Churchill' but there is space only for seven letters under the

⁹⁶ The Canadian government kept diplomatic channels with Vichy open, partly at the request of the British government, until the invasion of North Africa in 1942, when the French opened fire on the Allies and thus clearly

ink stain. 'Weygand', however, has seven letters. Most historians now agree that the evidence points to Rougier's involvement, with Charles Roux, in an attempt at swaying Weygand to the British side.⁹⁷ But, supposing that this was the case, why did Rougier committed what amounts to political suicide by lying about his mission in order to cover up for Pétain and some of his supporters? There is no answer to this question. There only remains the following sad story.

Although he was worried for his personal safety, Rougier wanted to go back to France to give his testimony at Pétain's trial. He was refused an entry visa in his own country. He sent the originals along; they disappeared. *Les accords Pétain-Churchill* was a public relation disaster for Rougier. As his book was cited in a number of trials, including that of Pétain himself, his became the focus of much animosity. He could not find any publishers in France for many years, including the Éditions de Médicis, who had published his books in political economy before the war. He only found an editor in Geneva, Constant Bourquin, with a shady past. When the Mont-Pèlerin society was founded in 1947 on the model of his own *Centre international d'études pour la rénovation du libéralisme*, by his friend, Friedrich von Hayek, he was not invited: Sir Lionel Robbins blackballed him because he had accused Churchill of lying (Allais 1990, 34). Back in France at last, Rougier had to go through the two *commissions* already mentioned. He lost his job and any means of subsistence, until he won his appeal in 1954. The only friends were now in the extreme right, the victims of the purges at the *Libération*. Rougier became a regular collaborator to the only pro-Pétain journal, *Écrits de Paris*; but he was also living in the house owned by the editor of that journal, as he had no other means to afford rent.

However, if the two *commissions d'enquête* look like political trials, this was not without cause. Rougier had not been an innocent bystander. In addition to his numerous contributions to the journal *Écrits de Paris*,⁹⁸ he became very active throughout the second half of the 1940s and most of the 1950s in organisations set up in defence of Pétain and his supporters, speaking at political meetings to denounce the *épuration* and in support of an appeal against the condemnation of Pétain. He was also active on a committee that petitioned the United Nations against alleged war crimes committed at the *Libération*. In the late 1940s, when French right-

showed in which camp they belonged. But Dupuy was quickly put aside because Gaullists saw him as sympathetic towards Pétain. For Dupuy's account, see (Dupuy 1966/67).

⁹⁷ See (Frank 1992) and (Delpla 1996).

⁹⁸ A number of which were reprinted in the French-Canadian monthly magazine *L'Œil*. This magazine reflected the conservative, Catholic moral and political culture dominant in Québec in the 1940s and 1950s.

wing parties started to campaign for an amnesty, Rougier was again active.⁹⁹ The list of his deeds is very long indeed and it was a visible, central figure of the extreme right, with perhaps the stature of Maurice Bardèche, that was targeted.

At any rate, whatever Rougier did and said *after* the war is one thing. One may justifiably think ill of him for having defended supporters of that rogue state, Vichy. But it is only through ignorance of the facts that he has been accused of *collaboration* and anti-Semitism.

The reasons underlying Rougier's switch to the extreme right are complex and probably lacking in coherence. It is quite clear that there was little room under the *IVe République* for a right-wing movement opposed to de Gaulle. But on matters of principles, Rougier's opposition to de Gaulle was typically that of a liberal fearing de Gaulle anti-parliamentarian and autocratic tendencies, and of a liberal who stands against the central planning, which was at the heart of Gaullist economics, and who opposed vehemently to any deals with the communists. But it is hard to see exactly how this coheres with the political views of the Pétain supporters which became his allies over the controversy about the mission to London and Pétain's 'double dealing'. After all, Rougier was not anti-Republican, nor was he a supporter of the *révolution nationale*.

The same goes for Rougier's connections with the so-called *nouvelle droite*, to which I have already alluded. In the 1960s, Rougier was befriended by Alain de Benoist, and he participated in the activities of an institution of the *nouvelle droite*, the G.R.E.C.E.¹⁰⁰ Like its forerunner, *L'Action française*, the *nouvelle droite* was not interested in direct political intervention but in a so-called 'Gramscian' strategy, that of developing a new right-wing *ideology*. This new ideology resembled very much that of Maurras and *L'Action française*, as Rémond pointed out (Rémond 1982, 283-289), and seems closer to 'legitimism' than Rougier's 'Orleanism'. There are indeed some common ground but also some noticeable differences: first, Maurras, Rougier and de Benoist are 'elitists'. One should note, however, some differences: Rougier's notion of 'elites' is not the traditional one and, while Maurras expects one to accept one's station in the society and perform its duties, Rougier always emphasized in a less conservative spirit the free circulation of 'elites'. Secondly, Maurras, Rougier and de Benoist are united in their condemnation of egalitarianism. They agree in seeing it as originating in Jewish thought. But we have seen that

⁹⁹ See, e.g., his pamphlet, *Pour une politique d'amnestie* (Rougier 1947d).

¹⁰⁰ For details about the contacts between Rougier and the *nouvelle droite*, see (Taguieff 1994, 136-137, 139, 151-152, 159, 187n., 189 & 191).

there are reasons to doubt that Rougier was an anti-Semite, and he was certainly not emphasizing the ‘Judeo-’ in ‘Judeo-Christian’ as the rotten core of Christian thought. He wanted above all to point out, from an atheist point of view, the religious origin of *mystiques* such as egalitarianism. Rougier never took Maurras seriously. Thirdly, Maurras, Rougier and de Benoist agree in denying egalitarianism also at the level of nations and races. Rougier’s apology of the ‘West’ in *Le génie de l’Occident* fits well within a tradition of defence of the Christian civilization. But Rougier’s ‘West’ is that of Greek rationalism (along, incidentally, with the social message of Christianity), therefore neither the Christian civilization dear to Maurras, nor the Pagan, Indo-European Europe that the *nouvelle droite* wishes to oppose to the Judeo-Christian heritage. One aspect of Renan’s influence is Rougier’s admiration for Ancient Greece. His ‘genealogy’ of France in *La France en marbre blanc* (Rougier 1947e) sees it as the heir of Ancient Greece. In this, he remains faithful to the author of ‘La prière sur l’Acropole’ (Renan 1947, 49-53). There is no room in Rougier for the teutonic romantic garb with which the *nouvelle droite* coats its vision of Europe. Rougier, like Maurras, was an admirer of Latin clarity, opposed to foggy romanticism. In his closing lecture to the Paris Congress of 1935, he rejected in his inimitable style, romantic philosophy, because

... it mistakes what is obscure for something deep, it confuses the emotional function of language with its logical or empirical function and, doomed to the thick clouds of empty verbalism, it casts the shadows of Northern mists on the clarity of Latin ideas. (Rougier 1936d, 90; 1936f, 195)

Moreover, the *nouvelle droite* also sees the United States, the daughter of democracy and liberalism, as an enemy of Europe. There is no such thing in Rougier, who rather wanted France to emulate the political institutions of the United States, in order to safeguard individual liberties against abuses of the state. It is true, however, that Rougier was much taken by Guglielmo Ferrero’s distinction between ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ civilizations (Rougier 1929, 188-189) and, in a rare instance of *anti-américanisme*, condemned the United States for its lack of high culture (Rougier 1929, 235-138, 242-244 & 255). But for Rougier the task of the future was to provide it with one by the recruitment of an elite of artists and scientists, not to adopt some other economical and political system. De Benoist’s use of Nietzsche and Heidegger, along with a host of other German reactionaries, and his critique of America on pseudo-ecologist grounds have strictly nothing to do with Rougier. To this I should add that any rapprochement between Rougier and the *nouvelle droite* has to be done at the expense of Rougier’s defence of political

and economic liberalism. It is no surprise that Alain de Benoist's recuperation¹⁰¹ of Rougier was done on the basis of a selective use of his writings, which emphasizes the anti-Christianism and the anti-egalitarianism. It does not exhaust Rougier's political thinking but provides a skewed image of it.

All this is not, of course, intended as a whitewash of Rougier. His links with the extreme right after the war and from the 1960s onwards are undeniable. But Rougier's respect for de Benoist is to me as incomprehensible as it is reprehensible. It seems to me merely that one ought not to read too much from these links and attribute to Rougier views that he never held and, in light of his stated beliefs, which he could never have held. Moreover, one should avoid committing the fallacy of finding Rougier guilty by association. To take another controversial case, the fact that Spanish fascists plundered Ortega y Gasset's work does not mean that he was a fascist, as he was not (Dobson 1989, 95-105). After all, the *nouvelle droite* also admires Russell...

Comte's *positivisme* had already entered a slow decline at the turn of last century and it was almost completely to disappear from French universities after 1945. Rougier's intellectual project shows how logical empiricism could have helped to renew that tradition. The reasons why logical empiricism never put out roots in France are, however, too numerous and complex to be discussed here. At least, one may try and evaluate the impact of Rougier's political involvement on this failure. (The identification of positivism with Charles Maurras, which introduces grave distortions, is certainly largely responsible for its disappearance after the war.) Was it because logical empiricism came to be identified, through Rougier, with right-wing politics? Outside France, the implication that logical empiricism is a philosophy with extreme-right or even right-wing political connotations, almost as if to be positivist is a necessary and sufficient condition for being right-wing, capitalist, etc., would be seen as preposterous. But, in France the political outlook of the philosopher invariably plays a significant role in the assessment of their philosophy and it is thus a very strange paradox that in a country where political affiliations play such an important role, logical empiricism is usually perceived as belonging to the extreme right, as if, for example, Neurath was the propagandist of Anglo-American capitalism, while someone like Heidegger was the philosophical reference *par excellence* for generations of left-wing

¹⁰¹ In writings such as (de Benoist, 1974, 1983a, 1983b).

philosophers. However, this utterly absurd situation —literally the world upside-down— provides an important clue. That so many philosophers had no qualms when reading Heidegger but recoiled in horror at the mere mention of Rougier shows that the identification Rougier with Vichy could only have been a *mere pretext* to consign his books to oblivion.¹⁰² The Vienna Circle has been routinely pictured in Parisian circles as a bunch of capitalist philosophers. But the real reason for these false associations lies elsewhere, in the fact that French philosophers were and are still on the whole viscerally opposed to both empiricism and logic and also deeply hostile to liberalism. Logical empiricism was simply perceived in philosophical quarters as anti-metaphysical, therefore as life threatening. To paraphrase Raymond Aron, who has been referred to as “*la pensée officielle du Capital*” (Lacoue-Labarthe 1987, 43), philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger “*unmask* [metaphysics] in a language [metaphysical] enough to suggest a new [metaphysics]” and they renew metaphysics “through their obscurity” (Aron 1968, ix). Rougier’s eviction from the *Éducation Nationale* provided a convenient excuse, where Nietzsche’s fascist ethos was ignored through partial readings and Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazis brushed under the carpet. Somewhat, Nietzsche’s anti-egalitarianism is a fine and subtle thing, a rightful criticism of the Enlightenment, while Rougier’s anti-egalitarianism, with its basis in the liberal thought of the Enlightenment, is crass and the mark of evil. To exaggerate ever so little, Rougier was bound to remain isolated, even if he had never written a word in support of Vichy. After all, he was also a liberal, thus necessarily a *penseur du capital*...

¹⁰² I had the benefit here of discussions with Pascal Engel; for a similar analysis, see (Engel 1996, 48).

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