

**UNIVERSITY „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” OF IASI  
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DOCTORAL THESIS

RESUME

**COMMUNITARIAN PERSONALISM OF EMMANUEL MOUNIER**

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## **Introduction**

The paper entitled „Communitarian Personalism of Emmanuel Mounier" it is the result of the effort of understanding the itinerary of Mounier and its role in the direction of changing the paradigm about the person, consistent personalism within *Esprit* movement developed in various stages and confrontations with other philosophers with different orientations. The title itself indicates not only the starting point, but also the goal we want to achieve it, to check the validity and timeliness of philosophical proposal of Mounier, in the current context marked by an obvious marginalization of the person, which favors the appearance of anonymous individual, in the age of economic globalization and virtual existence.

### **1. Background research**

In the context of our research, we can speak of a macro and a micro-context. Macro-context refers to the way in which the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, amid the crisis of civilization develops his own theory about the person. Therefore, we want to identify some influential far and close that they suffer from, and thinking positions towards that take action. Amid this situation is essential to develop „the third alternative", the Communitarian personalism, in dialogue with the thinking of modern or contemporary philosophers of Mounier, with Christian perspectives concerned to give a Christian vision to their personaliste orientation. Micro-context research refers, on the one hand to proximal influences that they suffer from the same philosopher in developing its personalist philosophy (J. Chevalier, Ch. Peguy, H. Bergson), and on the other hand, the factors which directly influence his philosophical reflection in the adoption of a personalist philosophical positions. Mounierian personalism position appears on the background of the problems caused by some philosophical, social and economic doctrines, like Marxism or some of the radical nationalist ideologies such as fascism, not having a rebound so strong nowadays.

#### **1.1 Assumptions**

The assumptions underlying our reflection are as follows: there was a new consciousness of human value, a new terminology and a new vision of man; we have a new type of person who has a new conception of itself and, today, man perceives actively and relational the tension toward a new and more secure future socially and economically.

The dissertation thesis that we want to argue can be formulated as follows: the Communitarian personalism, as conceived, founded and developed by Mounier, is a valid

philosophical answer for any crisis of civilization that defies the person and quality of life. This involves a return to a correct vision of the person that integrates a variety of factors: the existence embodied in a community, respect for personal privacy, employing them as the willingness to assume responsibility towards life, reciprocity of consciences and the primacy of spirit in the community.

## **1.2 The purpose of this paper**

The complex historical moment that cover the Romanian society is obviously marked by events of a economic, social and political, that questions about the identity of the human person and the values that reference them. In this direction our research is inserted about the personalistic philosophical perspective, developed by Emmanuel Mounier, especially through the *Esprit* magazine, about how it was received in contemporary French philosopher philosophical literature, but also in the subsequently, in different geographical areas European and extra, despite some distrust due to contrary view and philosophical mounierian personalism.

Based on these aspects, we aim to highlight the concept of person closely with personalist philosophical and theological tradition in order to bring the current philosophical debate, with the landmark necessary Mounier's contribution to correct and deep understanding of the human person. The deepening personalism mounierian aims to highlight the importance of the human person, not as an end in itself, but in order to bring the current philosophical debate, with the landmark necessary Mounier's contribution to deep understanding and accurate human person.

We believe that Mounier's personalist thinking can be a starting point and a current valid antidote to meet the requirements of the European globalised society issues and to examine the planetary man about the own identity conscience in today's global society, which it perceives and lives as an anonymous character.

## **1.3 The documentary basis**

Having established the purpose of this paper, we'll treat the theme of personalism, using as a documentary basis the French philosopher writings in French, grouped in Mounier's works (*Oeuvres de Mounier*), contained in four volumes, published by Éditions du Seuil Publishing House, which reflects the perspective of personal experience of the author as well. Then we'll make use of recent authors reflections which treats, in broad sense or

restricted the predominant themes of philosophy mounieriene and personaliste wich bears the imprint of his ideas.

#### **1.4 Status of knowledge in the field**

Following a personal study recently found that lack a specific approach to the personalism of Mounier in the Romanian philosophical context. However, there are some of the influences of Romanian thinkers such as E. Ionesco, Mihai Sora, or critical thorough analysis, such as Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, *Personalimul francez. Geneză și împlinire*, Editura Științifică, București 1971, or Alexandru Boboc, *Filosofia contemporană. Marxismul și confruntările de idei în lumea contemporană*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București 1982.

Since we are dealing with historical and philosophical information concept, we refer to different strategies for gathering information from sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, magazines, studies of philosophy and history books personalist specific nature, focusing on types of argumentation, matched with the requirements of the thesis announced: logical, comparative and analytical.

#### **1.5 Novelty of thesis**

The proposal of a line of thought in the personalist philosophy takes into account not only a theoretical part in which the argument highlights the importance of a Christian philosophical views about the person, but also a practical part, which refers to a personalistic field orientation of life, in which prevails the respect towards the dignity, solidarity and charity, which can attract attention to a personalist way of reporting to oneself and to others. On the other hand, we believe that novelty thesis is to emphasize the need for a paradigm shifts in the way to relate to the person and to the society, which, in a sense, has managed and continues to change, in spite of the present difficulties in some civilized societies, the relationships between people and their vision of the world, becoming a special style of normal life, not starting from the social, economic or political aspect, but the person from its value.

#### **1.6 Method of operation**

The work which addressed the theme of personalism mounierian we try to apply the following working method, which takes into account the defined theme and its progressive deepening: we will endeavor that any statement should be based on consultation and using

objective sources, first works which reflect the views of Mounier and, secondly, on the work done on the edge of his thinking.

We believe that the appropriate research method is the critical perspective, with analytic, and monographic outlook, which is observed in dividing the chapters and subchapters and deepen some fundamental concepts insistence and in confrontation of some authors that inspired and take position regarding Mounier's personalism .

In the first chapter, „Context mounierian personalism” the main concern will be to careful and critical analysis of the reality of European civilization crisis, which caused in the thought of Mounier taking a firm stand and the emergence of the idea of a revival, starting from a new idea of person on this background that generated a „disorder determined" with significant social and anthropological consequences. Therefore, it is a historical reconstruction of this moment that follows the steps pursued by the French philosopher, with lights and shadows inherent to develop his project personalist and community and movement around the *magazine* Esprit.

In the second chapter, „Meaning the person in relation to structure personal universe", we will try to outline the basic concepts related to the structure of the person's reflection of Mounier, and in the previous reflection, like person, nature, embodied existence, communication, commitment and action in relation to the thinkers that Mounier enter into dialogue. Bibliographical fundamental reference in this regard will be Mounier's book, *Traité du characters*.

In the third chapter, „The discourse on person and community," our concern will be to focus on the most important steps in defining Communitarian personalism. We consider as a starting point Mounier's reading of history which favors a proper understanding of the factors influencing the onset of the philosophical doctrines in favor or against the person. To do this, Mounier not hesitate to enter into dialogue with the thinking of philosophers which focus their reflections on person and society through intelligent conceptual analysis.

## **1.7 Limits of work**

In the systematic exposure of the paper, we are aware of the existence of the inevitable limitations that do not directly affect the logic thread and leader of our research. These limits relate to contents, so the presentation of influences suffered by Mounier in the evolution of his thought. Another limit refers to the quantity of the material to be analyzed. Sources of information and documentation in foreign languages does not always favor a

concise expression in Romanian language. Much remains open perspectives that can be complemented by a subsequent specific research.

## **Conclusions**

In this work, we have tried to accomplish, gradually, initial objectives, through the methodology specified in the introduction. We are convinced that the persevering study emphasized the connections between Mounier, the man, inserted into the society of his time who suffers its challenges such as economic, social, political and cultural, and Mounier, the philosopher, who tried to meet the challenges of the crisis of civilization, apparently indicated in the above mentioned areas, but, as has been noted, with direct consequences for the vision of the person and her life. Mounier, through the Communitarian personalism has repositioned the place and role of the person in relation to areas of human existence, so, whenever it refers to Mounier's personalism, it starts from the person who is incarnate in existence, linked to the primacy of spirit and the ongoing dialogue with the community of people.

The fundamental reason that supported our research effort was based on the belief that in reality the anthropological, economic, social and cultural crises, which interrogates and provokes the human, not without consequences remote or proximate on human life and the community can be overcome by dialogical serious and sincere reflection, on the sacred value of the person who can awaken a consciousness and a new perspective about man and his history, able to be projected in the future, by reporting to the community and religious, Christian. The crisis does not necessarily represent the end of an era, but the occasion for a critical review of concepts and values which found the person, and throw on solid foundations of a new personalist perspective, taking into account the dates of experience which influenced positively or negatively the historical road map.

In our incursion in the historical context in which E. Mounier found his own personalist philosophy through clear assumptions, we identified the areas of interest for French philosopher, who have made their mark in an effort to provide an original and personal solution to overcome the crisis of civilization caused by philosophical and social systems, with a limiting influence on the person and the values present in it, thus contributing to the rebirth of a new humanism. These systems are specified by the French philosopher: Marxism, individualism and idealism embodied in positions of ideological thinking. Mounier realized the gravity of the crisis, took it as a challenge, in which he discovered his philosophical vocation, to influence positively the history of philosophy twentieth century, through the project of a new humanism, as opposed to any individualist or collectivist type

alienation. This project envisages a possible spiritual revolution, refuse to consider his personalism as a system, since the person stated in a particular historical context.

Mounier offers professional philosophers a bold interpretation of the existence philosophies. He maintained the Christian tradition in the idea of person, which enriched it with new elements of action, communication, transcendence, which highlights dynamism in the world. Although apparently lacks rigor of his philosophy, it can not be labeled as ideology and utopia, being developed in the laboratory of life, as a result of deliberate choices, after the example of Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel and other philosophers, therefore outside academic philosophy which is based on a fundamental systematic structure. Mounier express himself as a conscience of his generation, considering the philosopher lives being inseparable processes and tension to an absolute sense. He favors a flexible logic, contrary to logic and rigid and closed, however, prefer clear and distinct thinking. The place where mature his personalistic philosophy is the magazine *Esprit*, the support of his thinking into reality. Also, Mounier does not feel alone in developing his philosophical response to the problem of civilization, but facing contemporary thinkers who, like him, will provide a new vision of man and the world, among which Ch. Péguy, J. Maritain N. Berdiaev, H. Bergson, M. Nédoncelle.

Mounier builds „the third alternative" on a rigorous analysis of the structure of the personally universe. For this reason, we have made a careful insight into the ancient and medieval tense debate, linked to the sometimes fragile, between nature and person, the individual and the person sending the precise theological and philosophical arguments. It seems that Mounier is aware of the dynamics of these troubles that guide in developing his design personalist, emphasizing the idea that the person is not immediate experience of a substance, but gradually a personal life experience. The conclusions reached as a basis for further deepening. Mounier aware the person is a significant unit and from this point of view, the concepts are not enough, the person is not an immobile architecture, but directed towards the future, so continue to self-overcoming. In this respect, it is important to personalism mounierian just what it says, but equally important is what he denies. We believe that, among others, the statement that distinguishes Mounier's personalism is that the person is an absolute, not Absolute, in that it can never be treated as a means or as interchangeable object. A person can not be defined because it is not a pure spiritual experience detached from thing sensitive: it is linked to a corporeal existence, is open to the relationship by communicating with others, manifests and reveals into the actions performed.

Amid dynamic conception of embodied existence, Mounier develops vision of society in dialogue with Scheler's thinking about the person and the community, where the sociality is inherent to the person. The denial of the individual itself is indispensable to the movement towards person, understood as choice, training, acquiring and opening to the world.

Here, Mounier sees the meaning of community to design the person towards its progressive achieving, within the community, which implies a personalistic pedagogy of the community, rejecting, contemporary the philosophies about me. Therefore, the person appears as a limit to the true community who struggle against the individual, as a limit to bourgeois civilization. From this perspective, one can foresee the novelty of Communitarian personalism of Mounier. For him, the idea of person is centered on the Incarnation, communion and vocation, which embraces the whole personally universe. From Mounier, one can speak of „the principle of person" able to give life to a revolution of the person, contemporary personalistic and communitarian, in any context would be.

Mounierian philosophical personalism remains a current reference through authentic meaning that you return to the respect for the human person in every stage of its existence, by valuing the wealth and beauty of its report with himself and with others, with society and transcendent reality.

### **Keywords**

Person, personalism, crisis, individualism, burgeois man, method, influence, concept, anthropology, Christian perspective, personal universe, embodied existence, communication, intimacy, commitment, action, history, society, humanity, individually self, primacy of spirit, marxism, existentialism, community, topicality.

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