Arthur Versluis

A Conversation with Alain de Benoist

During a summer visit to Paris, I spent an afternoon with Alain de Benoist, the well-known founder of the French New Right. He was a gracious host, and for lunch we dined at an enjoyable, out-of-the-way restaurant that featured traditional, very rich French cuisine. We spoke about many subjects, and exchanged some books and journals. Later, we went back and forth by e-mail to produce the following conversation, which includes his final thoughts on the unusual exchange between him and Tamir Bar-On, who has written extensively on the French New Right in English, and with whose work its subject, Alain de Benoist, takes great issue. Our conversation ranged widely, but also includes de Benoist's final words on the controversy with Bar-On, whose incendiary response to de Benoist is included in the *Dossier* section at the end of this issue.

Arthur Versluis (AV): Roger Griffin, Tamir Bar-On, and others who specialize in the study of what is variously termed the "radical right," the "far right," or the "extreme right," have argued that the Nouvelle Droite really seeks "conserving the fascist vision in the interregnum," to quote from Griffin. In other words, the "New Right" is just a way of marking time until some form of fascism can be restored to power. How do you respond to this hypothesis, and to these kinds of labels?

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Alain de Benoist (ADB): In the first place I am not inclined to respond to such labels, as I find them extraordinarily pathetic and ridiculous. So far I have published nearly 100 books, more than 2,000 articles, and given more than 400 published interviews. There isn't a single line in favor of "fascism" in there. My books have been published by some of the biggest French publishers (Robert Laffont, Plon, Albin Michel, Table ronde, Bernard de Fallois, etc.). In 1977, I was awarded the Grand Prix de l'Essai de l'Académie française. I am a regular guest on radio and television programs. Well, this does not quite sound like the trademark of a "fascist." In 2012, I published my autobiography, *Mémoire vive*. This more than 300-page-long book does not espouse or document the itinerary of a "fascist." Such charges are clearly ad hominem attacks, bearing the mark of anachronism and intellectual laziness.

Today there is no definition of fascism that is unanimously accepted by political science researchers. Tamir Bar-On himself admits, "defining fascism is tricky because there is no universal consensus definition of what constitutes fascism." He cites in this regard Roger Griffin and Stanley Payne, but does not make any mention of Juan Linz, Pierre Milza, Renzo De Felice, Zeev Sternhell, Ernst Nolte, Klaus Hildebrand, Jules Monnerot and many others who, for the most part, he conspicuously ignores. Worse, he does not even offer himself any definition of fascism. Neither does he provide a definition of racism. This enables him, therefore, to dub someone as a "racist"—someone like me, who has published three books against racism and has demonstrated, based on ample arguments, the fallacious and harmful character of all racist theories. Instead Bar-On prefers right at the very outset to position himself on the side of those who put on display the word "fascism" to insult somebody, a word which is now being exploited for the sole purpose of delegitimizing or discrediting the opponent. It is a common knowledge that the word "fascism" belongs now primarily to a polemical vocabulary having nothing to do with real fascism. In France, just to give one example, General de Gaulle, the leader of the Resistance against the Nazis during the German occupation, was himself on countless occasions labeled a "fascist" after his return to power.

No longer defining a political or ideological reality that can be empirically determined, "fascism" has thus become an empty word, a

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cliché or a catchword, a *Gummiwort* (elastic concept), a "sound bite," a buzzword—a fantasy-prone notion to which anyone can assign an ad hominem defamatory meaning of his own choice. Roger Griffin, for example, argues that "palingenesis" is a specific trait of fascism, whereas this is rather a characteristic of the Christian thought (see the theme on the "new man" of St. Paul in Col. 3:10, Eph. 4:24). For communists, fascism is defined as the "last resort" of capitalism. For liberals, it is a form of totalitarianism directly related to Stalinist communism. Recently, the locutions "red fascism" or even "Islamofascism" have been invented. These conflicting interpretations, these absolutely meaningless verbal formulations, show that the debate about fascism today is at level zero of the thought process. In the words of the great Walter Benjamin, one should never forget that fascism also contains anti-fascism . . .

The historical and real fascism was that of Mussolini's *ventennio*. This was a dictatorial regime. As far as I am concerned, I am horrified by all dictatorships. Fascism was an exacerbated form of nationalism. I have never stopped criticizing nationalism, which I interpret as the accomplished form of the "metaphysics of subjectivity" which Heidegger characterized as the founding ideology of modernity. Italian fascism was militaristic, conquest prone and regulated by the principles of the leader ("Il Duce ha semper ragione"). I hate militarism, imperialism and all principles of the führership. It was also a system inclined toward gigantism, whereas I myself am a supporter of Fritz Schumacher's "small is beautiful." It was a regime focused on mass production, whereas I have published a whole book (*Demain, la décroissance*) against economic growth. It was a typical regime of modernity, while we have now entered into postmodernity. As for the main theorists of fascism (Giuseppe Bottai, Carlo Costamagna, Ugo Spirito, Berto Ricci, Sergio Panunzio, Ardengo Soffici, Alfredo Rocco, Giovanni Gentile, Camillo Pellizi, Antonino Pagliaro, etc.), it takes a few years to study them in depth, and it is way too obvious that Bar-On has not read them.

AV: Can the Nouvelle Droite really be accurately described as "radical," or does it more properly belong to the conservative tradition? Here I am using the word "conservative" deliberately, not "Right." Are you "radical"? In what senses are you conservative?

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ADB: The only positive thing I could find in the word radical is its etymological meaning, derived from *radix*, "the root." "Getting to the root of something," to work on the genesis of an idea, this could be described as "radical." However, today this word is stripped of its original meaning. Sometimes—particularly in Germany—it refers interchangeably to the "radical right" or the "far right." In the United States, "radicals" are generally spotted on the extreme left (but in France one speaks also about the "ultra-left," which is supposedly still beyond the extreme left). This association of radicalism with extremism can create confusion. For my part, I hate extremism—which I view as a real disease of the mind, whenever it is not triggered by youthful drive to excessive behavior. Extremists are simplifiers who like to argue by using "definitive" statements and slogans, thus demonstrating their inability to understand the complexity of the world. For my part, I am only keen about differences and especially nuances. In this sense, yes, I am absolutely not a "radical." In France, things are further complicated by the fact that one of the oldest French political parties, the Parti radical, is also one of the most moderate parties! In the common language its members, the *radicaux*, are regularly categorized as *centristes*.

The word "conservatism" generates further problems. This word is commonly used in England, in the United States and in Germany. In France and in Latin countries, it is almost never used except in a pejorative sense (as a synonym for a reactionary bourgeois). It won't cross anybody's mind to introduce himself as a conservative. Moreover, while in France the Right was born as a reaction to the Left, in the United States "conservatism" was largely born out of reaction to the ideas of the French Revolution and in the wake of Edmund Burke. However, this cleavage between conservation and revolution was put into question in Germany by the movement known as the Konservative Revolution, whose main intellectual figures, well studied by Armin Mohler, had attempted to make a synthesis of these two concepts. Such an idea has gained ground. In France, it was a left-wing author, Edgar Morin, who recently remarked in the newspaper *Libération*, "We must blend together revolution and conservation. There is no revolution without conservation. There is no conservation without revolution." I can concur easily with that statement.

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Some more words about the French Revolution. Bar-On describes me as an "enemy of the Revolution," which again shows that he has misread my words. First, I am not a supporter of the Ancien Régime. Whenever I criticize modernity, it is never in the name of any kind of "restoration." I do like some specifics of the Ancien Régime: some ethical values (the ethics of honor), and the fact that the society, as a whole, had still an organic character, especially in rural areas. However, I am quite hostile to the hierarchies and social inequalities which were only too common under the Ancien Régime. Considering the Ancien Régime, my sympathy does not go to the royal powers, but to the numerous popular insurrections directed against the central government. Second, I am one of those who, like Alexis de Tocqueville, Ernest Renan, and Georges Sorel, do not overemphasize the "break" between the Ancien Régime and the Revolution. The Revolution, obviously, took over many of the features of the political system preceding the year 1789; for example, it limited itself only to transferring absolute power to the "nation," a privilege that had previously been granted only to the King. Finally, I do not think the French Revolution, as an event, can be accepted or rejected across the board. I reject the influence of the Enlightenment, the xenophobic imperialism of 1793, the Terror, and the Vendéen genocide. However, I certainly do not reject the influence of Rousseau, the ideal of the culture of Antiquity and the Festival of Federation (14 July 1790). To describe me as an adversary of the French Revolution is an outright lie. Contrary to what many American conservatives think, the French Revolution seems even to me far more preferable to the American Revolution.

AV: You have some personal familiarity with Aleksandr Dugin. Could you comment on the significances in your view of his political and cultural agenda, and on his books, notably *The Fourth Political Theory*? What do you think about his notions of Eurasia and of a Eurasian imperium? Do you think he should be taken seriously? If so, what do you see as valuable in his work?

ADB: I made the acquaintance of Aleksandr Dugin in 1990, and I have been meeting him many times ever since, in Russia, France, and elsewhere. I consider him a man of impressive culture and especially a man of original

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personal thought. Neo-Eurasianism, of which he became the theorist, is an heir to the prestigious current of Eurasianism of the first generation, with people such as the economist Piotr N. Savitsky, the linguists Nicolas S. Troubetskoy and Roman Jakobson, the historian George V. Vernadsky, Nicolas Alexeyev, etc. Their influence, paradoxically, was felt from the 1920s onwards both in the Russian emigration and inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This current of thought represents in some way a continuation of the old conflict that in the nineteenth century opposed the Slavophiles and Westernizers (*zapadniki*). At the time of the "democratic transition" following the collapse of the Soviet system, Aleksandr Dugin began to renew this tradition within a context that was no longer marked by the Cold War. Under the influence of the historian and geographer Lev Gumiliev, he developed a theory of geopolitics of great importance, which has by now many followers in the Russian political and military circles, along with a general philosophy that borrows from the authors such as Carl Schmitt, Heidegger, Max Weber, Gilbert Durand, and many others. As an Orthodox Christian and a "traditionalist" influenced by the writings of René Guénon, he also theorized on a number of esoteric and "mystical" issues which, personally, remain foreign to me. More recently, he put forward the idea of the "fourth political theory," which I find particularly interesting. The eighteenth century saw the birth of liberalism, the nineteenth century that of socialism, the twentieth century that of fascism. All these ideologies are either in crisis or have disappeared. What will the twenty-first century offer?

It seems to me that we have to take very seriously the notion of "Eurasia" which, far from being only Dugin's property, links up directly to the theories of the main geopoliticians since the time of Rudolf Kjellén, Alfred Mahan, Nicholas Spykman, and Halford Mackinder. The latter, in particular, defined the "Heartland" as world matching with the Eurasian bloc, which he considered as the true geographical pivot of the world (an idea that can still be found in *The Grand Chessboard* by Zbigniew Brzezinski). The same geopoliticians also speculated much about the fundamental opposition between the Earth and the Sea, which was also the subject of a book by Carl Schmitt. For Dugin, who is a firm advocate of a multipolar world (and not a unipolar world dominated by the United

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States), Eurasia represents the largest continent of the telluric power, opposed to the maritime powers. What is interesting is that he adds to this general perception the idea of the Empire as opposed to the Western idea of the nation-states. This has prompted him to stress that Empire is always a multicultural space, and thus he takes a firm stand against all forms of racism and xenophobia. Dugin's theses have been studied by serious authors like Marlène Laruelle or, more recently by Véra Nikolski. At a time when Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, is regaining its traditional role of a great superpower, I think we should pay attention to the works of Aleksandr Dugin. His influence is already perceptible in some areas close to the Kremlin.

AV: A consistent theme in your work is criticism of American influence in Europe. There is a long European tradition of such criticism, of course. The homogenization of society, the hegemony of corporations, the uniformity of fast food restaurants, movies, popular music, all are seen as baneful . . . But there is also an American conservative tradition actually rather close to the perspectives espoused in the Nouvelle Droite and in your recent work: one that encourages localism and federalism, that distrusts centralized governmental power, that is agrarian and decentralized, represented by Jeffersonians and by Southern Agrarians, by some authors associated with *Modern Age*, not least of whom was Russell Kirk. Could you elaborate both on what you deplore about contemporary American society and its influences in Europe, but also on what you see as admirable in it?

ADB: I am very critical of the United States, although to be sure, I do not share any anti-American phobia. I've visited northern, southern, eastern and western parts of the U.S., I have spent much time there and I always enjoy going there. Other than the movies and great American writers (Mark Twain, Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, H.L. Mencken, Herman Melville, Henry James, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, etc.), I've been especially influenced by some modern American scholars. I would put first on the list Christopher Lasch, but I also include communitarian authors who have developed a well-argued critique of John Rawls's theses,

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such as Michael Sandel (to whom I must add Robert Taylor of Canada and Alasdair Macintyre of England). As for Britain I must cite George Orwell, William Morris, and G. K. Chesterton.

I know well the authors you mention, starting with the paleoconservatives Russell Kirk, Frank Meyer, and Robert A. Nisbet, and some of their heirs, like Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming. We could also put in this category the Englishman Roger Scruton, the German Caspar von Schrenk-Notzing, or the Austrian Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn. The late Thomas Molnar, who was close to those people (he was closely linked to Russell Kirk at the beginning of his career), remained until his death one of my closest friends. It must be pointed out though, that rather than being a "conservative," he was more of a Catholic counter-revolutionary: a disciple of Georges Bernanos, Gustave Thibon, Marcel De Corte (and in England of Christopher Dawson). Also his "perennial philosophy," which he opposed to "utopia," was not akin to Voegelin's thesis, or Leo Strauss, or even Maritain. In addition, his criticism of the "American Dream" became more systematic in the last years of his life. But to be honest, rather than those people, I prefer some modern critics of global capitalism like Jerry Mander, Naomi Klein, Thomas L. Friedman, George Ritzer, or Noreena Hertz.

This is not to say that I am not sensitive to the Jeffersonian current or the Southern Agrarians, although I can hardly recognize myself in their positions. I am sensitive to some criticism of "bourgeois philistinism" found in T. S. Eliot, Allen Tate, even John Crowe Ransom, but their criticism seems to me a bit superficial. American conservatives are attached to traditional values, family values, rural values, native values—for which I have sympathy. But I am critical of their tendency toward "moral order" (especially in sexual matters, under the influence of Puritanism), their lack of distance vis-à-vis Christianity, and obviously—and especially—their extraordinary timidity in tackling the ecological matters and their total absence of the critique of capitalism. They are quick to denounce "materialism" or the "disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung*), which Max Weber had attributed to Protestant capitalism, but they are absolutely unable to explain the theory of value, the essence of the over-accumulation of capital, the commodity fetishism and the reification of social relations as theorized by Karl Marx and after

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him Georg Lukács. Their anticommunism, their defense of the "free market," their inclination to steer the prosaic choices of the Republican Party, shows that they are part and parcel of the existing system.

You may know those words of Bossuet about those who "deplore the consequences of the causes which they cherish." These words often make me think about American conservatives. Many of them, even when they are not libertarians, adhere to methodological individualism. They believe that individuals are more important than collectivities. This is why they are opposed to state intervention, but also to any form of economic and financial regulation, which they generally equate with "socialism." This view prevents them from understanding the fact that the disintegration of collective identities is directly related to the growth of individualism, and also to the colonization of the imaginary exclusively by economic and commercial values, as well as the generalization of the axiomatic of interest. Despite the structural crisis that the capitalist system has been going through over the last couple of years, they continue to celebrate capitalism as a system that purportedly respects and guarantees individual freedom, private property, and free trade. They believe in the intrinsic virtues of the market, whose mechanism is viewed as the paradigm of all social relations. They believe that capitalism has something to do with democracy and freedom. They believe in the necessity (and need) of perpetual economic growth. In other words, they almost unanimously defend a capitalist system whose expansion, however, methodically destroys everything they wish to conserve.

Capitalism, however, has nothing conservative in itself. It is its very opposite! Karl Marx had already observed that it is due to capitalism that we owe the dismantling of feudalism and the eradication of traditional cultures, including the ancient shared values now being drowned in the "icy water of egotistical calculation." Today, more than ever before, the capitalist system stays oriented toward capital over-accumulation. It ceaselessly searches for more exchanges, more markets, more profits. However, such an objective can only be achieved at the cost of dismantling everything that stands in its way, starting with collective identities. A full steam market economy can only operate if most individuals have internalized a fashionable culture, a culture of consumption and a culture of unlimited growth. To transform the planet

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into a vast market—this being capitalism's main purpose—the planet has to be atomized and to renounce any form of the imaginary symbolic incompatible with the fever of novelty, the logic of profit and limitless accumulation. This is why capitalism is the system that has proven to be the most effective—much more than communism!—at erasing the borders. The main reason is that the economic logic puts profit above everything else. Adam Smith said already that the merchant has no other country than the one where he makes the biggest profit.

There are many things I like in the United States: strong energy and entrepreneurial spirit among many Americans, their sense of community (and communities), the quality of their great universities, a certain number of architectural accomplishments, etc. But there is also the other side of the coin. The American mentality is marked by an economic and commercial conception of the world, by the omnipresence of the biblical values and technical optimism. The tragic dimension of existence and human history is often out of sight. The United States has a short history that conflates with modernity: the American civilization is a civilization unfolding in space, not in time. During its brief history, the United States has known only one great political model, which has virtually remained unchanged since the days of the Founding Fathers. In Europe, by contrast, it is still possible to refer to such and such model amid countless political models that have existed in the past. The political debate in America often boils down to a discussion on the relative merits of Hamilton, Jefferson, Washington, etc. There is a general consensus on the value of the Constitution—which, however, is nothing but a piece of paper. Fascism and communism have never had any real impact in the United States, nor have any revolutionary thinking, nor critical Marxism, revolutionary syndicalism, situationism, etc. Politics boils down in the United States to a discussion regarding the competition between two major parties, which in the eyes of the Europeans say more or less the same thing. Electoral competitions often feature billionaires, which apparently does not bother anyone. American "democracy," seen from this point of view, is the rule of financial oligarchy for which money is the measure of all things.

Basically, the thought of the Founding Fathers was largely inspired by the Enlightenment, which involved a social contract theory, the language of the rights and the belief in progress. Christopher Lasch rightly

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remarked that "in the United States, the removal of one's roots has always been seen as the prerequisite for increased freedom." This negative attitude vis-à-vis the past is quite typical of the liberal mindset. The United States is born out of a desire to break up with Europe. It is from there that Americans have set up a society which Ezra Pound called a "purely commercial civilization." These are exactly the words that link up to Alexis de Tocqueville: "The passions that agitate the Americans are commercial passions, not political passions. They carry into the political arena the habits of commerce." However, the first immigrants had also desired to create a new society that would likely regenerate the entire mankind. They desired to establish the new Promised Land that could become the model for the Universal Republic. This biblical theme, central to the Puritan thought, keeps occurring as the chief leitmotif throughout American history. It makes up the foundation of "civil religion" and "American exceptionalism." By 1823, James Monroe had placed under the sign of Providence the first American doctrine on foreign policy. Virtually all of his successors have adopted the same approach ever since. In such a context, "international relations" means nothing else but the global diffusion of the American ideal. Being the model of perfection, the Americans do not need to know the Others. It remains for the Others to adopt their ways. One must not be surprised, under such conditions, that the setbacks encountered by the United States in its foreign policy are often the results of its profound inability to imagine that other people may think differently than Americans. In fact, for many Americans, the outside world (the "rest of the world") simply does not exist, or rather it can exist in so far as it becomes Americanized—a necessary precondition to become understandable. In this sense, the U.S. influence in the world needs to be criticized.

AV: In the past few years, you've begun to make inroads into the Anglophone world. Greg Johnson and others have been seeking to develop a "North American New Right," and recently you spoke at an event organized by Richard Spencer in Washington, D.C. Do you see the ideas of the New Right beginning to take root in the Anglophone world, and if so, what do you see as the most promising signs of this?

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ADB: I can't tell the future, but for now I remain skeptical. I have the impression that in America, those who are interested in the French "New Right" make of its work a selective reading, a work dotted with lots of misconceptions. No doubt they have the excuse that my most important books have not yet been translated into English. You mention my recent visit to Washington, following the invitation by Richard Spencer. I willingly accept all invitations extended to me (they come from all walks of life, i.e., from the German "conservatives" to the Italian Communist Party), but I obviously do not endorse automatically the views of those who invite me. I simply ask to be allowed to express myself freely. In Washington, I was asked to talk about my conception of identity. The two main ideas that I developed were that, first, identity is fundamentally dialogical (in the sense that Martin Buber gives to this word), which excludes identity being based on racism or xenophobia. Second, that what threatens most our identity is not the identity of the other peoples, but the system of globalized capitalism that tends to eradicate all rooted cultures in the hope of transforming the planet into a vast homogeneous market. As I said in Washington, having as a prime goal the unification of mankind, "the system implies that we must repudiate all forms of 'archaic' membership, systematically destroying the organic and symbolic base of traditional solidarity. The dynamics of modernity removes man from his natural or communitarian ties, disregarding completely his insertion into a specific human group. Modernity relies on an atomistic conception of society conceived fundamentally as a simple addition of free and rational individuals who are all expected to select, out of their own free will, their free goals and values that would guide their actions."

My intent was to offer a sharp criticism of liberalism in the European sense of the word. Liberalism is a political doctrine whose philosophical core is that the individual, from an ontological point of view, comes first with respect to society. Accordingly, he is naturally a holder of his rights and as such he must be the sole arbiter of his freedom and values. It logically follows from this, that no one should be legitimately opposed to the fact that each person becomes a carrier of his own private freedom within the context of economic affairs and market exchange. Liberalism is then an economic doctrine attempting to use the model of the self-regulated and self-regulating market as a paradigm for all other social

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issues. Being the proponents of free trade, the liberals (but also the conservatives and the libertarians in the U.S.—all of them equally hostile to "Big Government") endorse the idea of the superiority of the regulation of the economic life by the market, which is supposed to be the means for the most efficient, most rational, and therefore also the fairest way for exchange harmonization. It follows from this that the market is seen as a "natural" entity, reflecting a spontaneous order that precedes any kind of deliberation and decision. Being the form of exchange the most conform to human nature, the market, in hindsight, must have been thriving from the dawn of humanity in all societies. This reasoning is a total and manifest nonsense in view of the fact that the market, historically speaking, appears quite lately in Western societies. All traditional societies are "holistic" societies where predominated the logic of the gift and counter-gift, as shown by Karl Polanyi (*The Great Transformation*). Far from having been a "natural" or "spontaneous" exchange, the market was even largely set up by the state. We can now understand why economic liberalism on the "right" and societal or cultural liberalism on the "left" are linked—and why at the same time the left-right cleavage has become redundant.

AV: In envisioning France and Europe in one hundred years, how would you like to see them? What would be ideal?

ADB: There is obviously no ideal society. There are only societies that are better than the others, at least in some circumstances. Projecting ourselves into the future within a century, at a time when we are not even able to predict where the United States, China and Russia will be ten or fifteen years down the road, is also quite a challenge . . . That's why I can only voice some wishes. I am a federalist (in the sense this word originally had in the United States, but not in the sense it has acquired today, where federal government has become a synonym of the national state power). More precisely, I am a supporter of "integral federalism," once theorized by Johannes Althusius and more recently by Alexandre Marc, Robert Aron, Denis de Rougemont, Thierry Maulnier, Paul Sérant, and many others. I think that small countries should federate with other small countries and that larger countries must become federalized. I think the

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basic idea lies in the principle of subsidiarity, which is to ensure that the biggest number of problems is to be solved at the lowest possible level. It is in this sense that I am in favor of localism, also favoring participatory and direct democracy, often called basic democracy. Finally, I am also in favor of a multipolar world, where large continental blocs of culture and civilization could play a role of regulatory poles in a globalized world. I am hostile to a Europe as a market (*Europe-marché*), but I am quite favorable to a Europe as a power (*Europe-puissance*), for it is only if Europe imposes itself as an independent power and becomes politically united that it can liberate itself from the domination of financial markets and, more generally, from the money system. I do not believe that an infinite material growth is possible in a finite space. Earth is a finite space. I am in favor of a sustainable growth decrease, that is to say, I am in favor [of] a way of life that is no longer based exclusively on consumption and production, but instead, becomes more respectful of the social bonds, natural resources and the balance of the ecosystems. If we could make some steps in these directions, that would be a good start.

AV: I have read and heard numerous criticisms of the European Union as a bureaucratic and artificial institutional structure. What do you see as the cultural effects of the European Union?

ADB: The European Union has not stimulated intellectual and cultural life, which is instead subject to some kind of decline today. We are no longer in the 1930s, when Henry Miller, Salvador Dalí, Luis Buñuel, Modigliani, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and many others looked at Paris as the "capital of culture"! Cultural life in Paris is represented now by small gestures of small groups of people without any major influence, and who live for and among themselves. The French language keeps steadily retreating all over the world in front of the onslaught of the "airport English," multiplying steadily its own verbal concessions to the "politically correct" discourse. During many trips of mine abroad, I regularly observe the loss of the prestige of French intellectuals.

When we talk about Europe today, words that often come to mind are those of helplessness, paralysis, democratic deficit, opacity, and the

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incomprehensible character of its institutional architecture. The financial crisis and the crisis of the euro have made things even worse. From the very outset the European construction has proceeded against common sense. Five key mistakes have been made: 1) The big-time illusion based on the assumption that starting from economy and commerce, instead [of] from politics and culture, and by some imaginary ratchet effect, economic citizenship could miraculously generate political citizenship. 2) The desire to create Europe from the top down to the bottom (the Brussels Commission), instead [of] from the bottom up (regions and nations). 3) Preference given, after the fall of the Soviet Union, to a hasty enlargement to countries that were poorly prepared to enter Europe, instead of strengthening the already existing political structures. 4) No attempt has ever been made to clearly designate the borders of Europe and the ultimate goals of the European construction. Europe as a large free trade zone or as an independent power are two totally different projects. 5) Europe has not stopped from constructing itself without however having its peoples getting seriously involved in the various stages of this construction. All this being said, it does not mean at all that we should give up on creating Europe. Instead, what is important is to restart the construction on other bases and in close cooperation with Russia. Well, this is a long-term project. Nietzsche once said, "Europe will be achieved at the edge of its grave."

AV: Early in your career, you published on Indo-Europeans, and you've also published on paganism. Today, what is your view of monotheisms? Have monotheisms had regrettable social, political, or religious consequences, and if so, what do you think those are?

ADB: In my view the fundamental problem with monotheism is that it sanctifies intolerance while laying the foundation for universalism, which after a long process of secularization, ends up in modern "one-worldism." As was well shown by Jan Assmann and Jean Soler, monotheism introduced a new regime of truth. It is generally agreed that polytheisms of antiquity were by principle hospitable to other deities coming from elsewhere—to the extent that even the dedication "To an unknown god" could be found in Athens. Pagan religions ignore crusades against

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"infidels" or "unbelievers," just as they ignore religious persecution, wars in the name of God, dogmas, schisms, and heresies. When confronted with foreign beliefs, paganism was inclined to "translate" the names of the gods by other names that are more familiar. Thus Zeus was "translated" into Jupiter, Isis into Artemis, Teutatès into Mars, etc. Monotheistic revolution put an end to such "translatability" because the essence of such a radically new form of religion is precisely to view the followers of other religions as enemies of God. The big difference between monotheism and polytheism lies in the fact that in monotheism only one religion can be truthful, while all others must be false. This was an unprecedented revolution, because it has radically changed the status of Otherness. From being complementary, the difference now becomes exclusive vis-à-vis other differences. The differences within paganism were seen as both natural and relative. In monotheism, the religious difference is condemned as an error or a lie. Monotheism describes Otherness as wicked—an attitude which reveals an extreme ethnocentrism. "Translatability" must now give way to conversion, for the simple reason that something false cannot be translated into something true. It follows that the Other cannot be admitted unless it is first reduced to the Same.

In paganism, it is naturally considered that there are different peoples with each having its own particular belief. These beliefs do not prevent other peoples from having their own. A natural link is thus established between the belief and belonging to a city or a nation. The Greeks worshiped the Greek gods; the Romans worshiped the gods of Rome. By contrast, monotheism adopts immediately a universalist outreach: the "God's people" by definition cannot be linked to any specific people or any specific territory. Catholicism, etymologically, means a "universal religion." From the statement of one God only proceeds the belief that all men are part of the same family and that everything that distinguishes them, starting with their cultures, has only a secondary or derivate importance.

AV: Is it possible or desirable to restore paganism in contemporary Europe?

ADB: My book on paganism, already 30 years old, is not a book about the necessity or possibility to organize the "comeback" of paganism. This is

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purely an intellectual study attempting to show philosophically and theologically what distinguishes monotheism from former European polytheisms. I point out that the essential difference lies not in the number of gods (a single God or more), but in the existing radical distinction between an uncreated Being (God) and a created Being (the World), wherefrom results the unavoidable devaluation of this world. "Mundus est immundus," said St. Augustine. Another key difference is the attitude toward temporality: the cyclical or "spherical" notion of the ancient Greeks, or, instead, the linear notion of a goal-oriented history, having an absolute beginning and moving toward an unavoidable end (a notion which, starting with the eighteenth century, will give birth to all modern forms of historicisms, as well as the ideology of progress).

Whether I consider possible or desirable the restoration of paganism, I am tempted to answer in the negative. Paganism is a religion of the whole city (*polis, civitas*); it loses its raison d'être when it is professed only within a small group. Moreover, the pagans of Antiquity never questioned the active presence of their gods. I doubt that "neo-pagans" today really believe in the gods they invoke; they reinterpret them rather in terms of "values" or symbols. Some of these neo-pagans can be sympathetic; others are just plain ridiculous (especially when they indulge the nonsense of the "New Age"). All of this is a reenactment, a kind of simulacrum, that is to say, the "second religiosity" already criticized by Spengler. Rather than a return to paganism, I would rather propose a more familiar approach of the stories and exemplary figures that paganism has bequeathed to us—and that has never ceased, over the centuries, to inspire thinkers, writers, and artists, especially since the Renaissance. Rereading the Homeric epics, immersing oneself in the thoughts of Aristotle or Seneca, discovering the preSocratic thinkers, reading attentively sacred texts such as the Hávamál, the Mabinogion, the Rigveda, the Avesta, or the Upanishads, means having an opportunity to hear voices that speak to us again. But again, we are here far from any "restoration of paganism."

AV: Early in your career, you demonstrated interest in the connections between genetics and IQ. What is your response to the work of Richard Lynn in particular, for instance *Dysgenics*, recently republished, or to the work of someone like Kevin MacDonald (*The Culture of Critique*)? Is

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research along the lines of genetics and IQ important for understanding human biodiversity? What are its cultural and political implications?

ADB: Studies on IQ and its heritability (a notion that should not be confused with heredity: heritability is relative to the part of the inter-individual variance which can be attributed to genetic factors) can certainly provide elements for the assessment of human biodiversity. Such studies also have the advantage of rebutting the idea inherent to the Enlightenment which, with Helvetius and Condorcet, construed man at his birth as tabula rasa. (Steven Pinker called it *The Blank Slate* in his book published in New York in 2002.) But as to myself, I am way off from all those who reduce everything to these considerations.

First, I am hostile to interpretations of human reality based exclusively on biology. In my eyes, social life is fundamentally of social-historical order. Sociology is not a branch of biology (although they can complement each other!). This is the reason why, once the stage of my positivist youth was over, on many occasions I condemned not only racism, but also social Darwinism (see my book *Des animaux et des hommes: La place de l'homme dans la nature*, [*Animals and Man: The Place of Man in Nature*], published in 2010). I was once told by the Nobel Prize winner Konrad Lorenz, at his home at Altenberg: "If you say that man is an animal, you're right. But if you say that he is only an animal, you're wrong." I never forgot these words. Second, on the epistemological level, I am quite hostile to any form of scientistic reductionism. Regarding these issues I must say that I have been influenced by the "philosophical anthropology" of Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen, Adolf Portmann, Helmut Plessner, etc. Unfortunately, the IQ fetishism is eminently reductionist. It suggests that the value of an individual depends solely or primarily of his measurable cognitive abilities—a belief also linked to the liberal ideology espousing a "meritocratic" and "quantitative" approach. This is not the way I see things. Just as I never judge individuals based on their belonging, I also never hierarchize them according to their cognitive abilities. I certainly prefer intelligent people to stupid people, but to be intelligent is not a guarantee that somebody is slated to say right things. The most aberrant ideologies have often been put on display by very intelligent people, even geniuses. I attach much more importance to the

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issue of character, sensibility, courage, generosity, and firmness of convictions. In the history of Europe, the valued model of the gentleman, gentilhomme, caballero, etc., has certainly not been characterized only by the capacity of IQ.

AV: Could you summarize what you find objectionable about the language of "human rights"? What do you see such language as masking or representing?

ADB: The ideology of human rights has now become a kind of new world civil religion, having primarily a legitimizing role in the global expansion of the market system. Since I am primarily concerned with defending pluralism and freedom, starting, of course, with those of minorities, my criticism of the ideology of human rights is close to that of the young Karl Marx. It has absolutely nothing in common with that of the counterrevolutionaries, such as Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald. This criticism can be formulated in three points.

First, the ideology of human rights is based on the subjective theory of law—i.e., theory of the modern natural law—which I consider absolutely false. This theory defines the "rights" as attributes of each human person who enjoy[s] them by virtue of his or her very human nature; one is thus entitled to enjoy a number of rights because these rights make an integral part of our being. This conception of law derives from medieval nominalism, which has led to modern individualism. As was well shown by the great legal philosopher Michel Villey, such a conception of law represents a radical break with the natural law of the Romans, which defined law as an equitable relationship, extraneous to the individuals and established by the decision of a judge, who had to say objectively what is right (*id quod justum is*) and what must be "given" to each person (*jus suum cuique tribuere*). In other words, the ideology of human rights belongs to subjective rights, whereas in my view there can only be an objective law.

Second is my objection that the ideology of human rights is specifically a Western construct. It was born at a specific place and time, which should prohibit it therefore from posing as a "universal rule." Furthermore, it is embedded in specifically Western notions, such as

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individual rights, which have no bearing in cultures where the individual cannot be envisaged outside the community he belongs to. Finally, the ideology of human rights is an ideology of moral and legal order, which means that it is a highly unsuitable tool for solving political problems. Political freedoms of individuals and groups, including those of minorities, must in my opinion be defended politically. They do not derive from some "right," but must be conquered politically and also guaranteed politically. This is what the sociologist Marcel Gauchet summed up in 1980 in his famous formula: "Human rights do not make a politics." I also believe that no individual can be considered free unless the community he belongs to is also free. I follow up here, not only on Rousseau, but also on the school of civic republicanism, which started with Thucydides and Machiavelli to reach out later to John Pocock and Quentin Skinner, including the masterful work by James Harrington, the author of *Oceana* (1656).

AV: *Nouvelle École* occasionally features particular cultural traditions—for instance, there is a quite interesting article on Nestinari dance and music (and related surviving cultural traditions) in Greece and Bulgaria. Such traditions could be seen, however, as relics, with little modern significance. What do you see as important and valuable about such surviving religious and cultural traditions, and what roles may such traditions have in the future you envision?

ADB: I don't think any people can live without traditions in a sustainable manner, because it is by means of traditions of shared values, which make up the basis of cultures, that people come together. Even the most heterogeneous populations have traditions. Of course, we must not fall into the fetishism of traditions, and we must avoid essentializing them. Traditions evolve over time, and they have not always been there. There was a time when a tradition began (it then had a status of novelty). In the past, many popular traditions were related to a rural lifestyle, a lifestyle that is in the process of disappearing now in developed countries. Some of them, however, are still maintained, while others are emerging. Most traditions are associated with the notion of festivities and games, notions that are nowadays more present than before. Régis Debray has well shown that

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traditions are comparable to the sacred: they both constantly reappear in unexpected forms. The role of traditions is always the same: to gather, to bring together, to connect the members of a given community. Their social usefulness is therefore undeniable. The only traditions that lose their meaning and power are those that transform themselves into "folklore," only to be consumed by tourists. Much could be said about the ways of how mass tourism has never ceased to impoverish traditional cultures, especially in the Third World. This is an issue very close to my heart, because I am member of the Board of the Association for the Protection of the Threatened Indigenous Cultures and Peoples, founded in Italy by Alessandro Michelucci.

AV: In your recent book on Carl Schmitt, you discuss the American neoconservative movement and the presidency of George W. Bush. What do you see as particularly important about Schmitt's work, and why do you think he is seen by those on the political left as important? He is a theorist of state, political, and juridical power, and his theoretical constructs—for instance, the "state of exception" discussed by Giorgio Agamben and others—seem to appeal to many on the left, perhaps even more than to those on the right. Why is that? What does Schmitt's work offer us today, in your view?

ADB: Tamir Bar-On merely describes Carl Schmitt as a "pro-Nazi" writer, which speaks volumes about his own mindset and his inability to understand the extraordinary complexity of Schmitt's work. Of course, I am the first to deplore the fact that Schmitt was a member of the Nazi party for three years (from 1933 to 1936, when he was excluded from all his official functions), the ideology of which he had never espoused (he even called for its ban in 1932!). The causes of this adherence are still being discussed. But it is no coincidence that the thought of Carl Schmitt, whose main works were published before 1933 and after 1945, is now attracting the attention of specialists of all opinions. It is not an exaggeration to say that Carl Schmitt is the author whose name attracts new interest from world scholars in the field of political science more than any other one. Do you know that since his death in 1985, more than 500 books and tens of thousands of articles have been devoted to him? In any case you are

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correct when you say that his "theoretical constructs . . . seem[s] to appeal to many on the left, perhaps even more than to those on the right." Suffice it to mention the names of Gary L. Ulmen, Joseph Bendersky, Ellen Kennedy, Chantal Mouffe, Ernest Laclau, Paul Piccone, Roberto Esposito, Gopal Balakrishnan, Jorge Eugenio Dotti, Andreas Kalyvas, Reinhard Mehring, Mika Ojakangas, Danilo Zolo, Louisa Odysseos, Pasquale Pasquino, Jean-Claude Monod, Sandrine Baume, Carlo Galli, Gabriella Slomp and many others. Schmitt's work, which was reintroduced in France in the 1970s by the joint efforts of Raymond Aron and the sociologist and former Résistance member Julien Freund, is even now in the process of being fully translated in China, after Korea and Japan!

If so many authors on the left are interested in Carl Schmitt, it is because, in my opinion, there are in his work elements of critique of liberalism (again in the European sense of the word), which they immediately perceive as very useful to develop a radical critique of global capitalism. However, it is also because his work on the evolution of the international law, his considerations on *The Nomos of the Earth*, and his criticism of the "just war" (which he describes as leading to the most inhumane forms of belligerency) seem to have found a mirror image in the latest political developments. Schmitt's studies on the partisan warfare and the rise of terrorism are just as timely as are his writings on the "state of emergency," which has found its modern resonance in the Patriot Act and the opening of the Guantánamo camp. As for the authors on the right, they refer more readily to the Schmittian definition of politics (and the difference he draws between politics and the political), based on the classical opposition between friend and foe. However, it is precisely on this point that, in my opinion, the views of Carl Schmitt would need to be made more nuanced. Dialectics of friend vs. foe is especially valid in foreign policy. Its implementation in domestic politics, however, is very delicate. Contrary to Schmitt, I think that the notion of friendship in politics comes before the notion of enmity. This is probably because I am more Aristotelian than Schmitt. Schmitt is primarily an Augustinian, obsessed with the notion of original sin, and who seriously believes that politics could disappear one day.

AV: France is reported to have immigrant-controlled suburban areas sometimes said to be "no-go" zones for ethnically and historically French

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people. These are areas periodically beset by violence, cars being set on fire, and so forth, and some social scientists have said that France in effect has instituted a kind of colonial apartheid within its borders. What would you like to say about such areas with regard to immigration policies in France, Italy, and Western Europe more broadly? What does the New Right have to say about situations like this in a contemporary context? And what do you see in the future in this regard?

ADB: Being *in abstracto* for or against immigration is meaningless. Everything depends on the volume of immigration, on the scale of influx of foreigners, on their professional qualifications, and on the sociocultural and historical circumstances. Six million Chinese in the United States: this makes a nice Chinese community. Six hundred million Chinese, and it is no longer America, but China. Moreover, the comparison between immigration to the United States and Europe is misleading. From the times of the Mayflower in 1620, the United States has always been a nation of immigrants, though it also experienced episodes of intolerance and xenophobia. In Europe, immigration is a relatively new phenomenon that started only with the modern era and has been gaining momentum over the last four or five decades. Essentially, this is an extra-European immigration, which has quickly turned into settlement immigration. The Socialist Michel Rocard said in 1989 that France and Europe "could not accommodate all the misery of the world." Yet this is precisely what has happened. Immigration has resulted in a series of social pathologies (crime rise, insecurity, unrest, ethnic tensions, school violence, the breakdown in education, various forms of inappropriate behavior, etc.). Immigrants are not always responsible for this, but the consequences of immigration add weight onto the host population and especially on the working classes, which are the first to suffer from these social pathologies.

One should not forget also that there are currently 125 million Europeans living below poverty line. The whole population is subject to the politics of austerity, which is becoming heavier by the day. The consequences of the financial crisis are still being felt; the unemployment rate is increasing (it exceeds 10 percent in France and runs up to 50 percent among the youth in Spain and Greece); the purchasing power is declining; and the process of deindustrialization is getting worse. Factories

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are closing down, one after the other. Within such a context, a sparsely controlled immigration appears to be unmanageable. Only employers and corporate enterprises remain favorable to immigration because if for the public sector immigration is more expensive than profitable, for the private sector, on the contrary, it is more profitable than expensive because the use of immigrants helps to exert a downward pressure on wages. Racism and xenophobia have nothing to do with that.

In the matters of immigration, Bar-On talks constantly about "multiculturalism." There is much that could be said about "multiculturalism," which in the first place is an empty word in view of the fact that all of us—immigrants and nonimmigrants alike—live in a single culture of merchandise. "Multiculturalism" is actually a euphemism for a multiethnic society. When he speaks of "pluralism," Bar-On is also not specific enough as to whether he means pluralism of opinions or pluralism of values. These are obviously not the same things, as all students in political science courses have to learn it. As Bar-On apparently considers himself as a "citizen of the world," he undoubtedly imagines that there are never too many immigrants in a country. He does not raise the question as to why countries like Canada, Israel, and Japan (to name only these) have much more restrictive immigration policies than most European countries. But the most important is that, adopting a fundamentally ethnocentric approach, he believes that in France the key question is whether one is "for or against multiculturalism," as may be applicable, for example, in England or the United States. However, in France, it is absolutely not in these terms that the debate is conducted. To put it simply, in front of those who criticize immigration, there are two very opposite "pro" camps. The first one, very small, is actually in favor of "multiculturalism." The second one, representing a large majority of people, is on the contrary extremely hostile to multiculturalism! "Multiculturalism" is a term that in public discourse gave way, long time ago, to "communitarianism." The violent hostility to "communitarianism" is now shared by almost all the parties, be they on the left or the right, even (and maybe especially) among the people who are the most in favor of immigration. To "communitarianism" they oppose the principle of "republican secularism (*laïcité*)" (on whose behalf, for instance, the government banned the wearing of the Islamic headscarf). The "republicans" in France (not to be confused with the Republicans in the

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U.S.!) are people who accept immigrants very well, but deny them any particularism, any community affiliation, any expression of religious beliefs in the public sphere. Hence the controversies that regularly emerge regarding the construction of mosques, halal food, etc.—controversies that also explain why former critics of immigration have now been replaced by critics of a so-called "islamisation." Such an attitude from the authorities derives from the old French Jacobin tradition, which has always been hostile to group particularities, to communities, to the regional languages and cultures; it prides itself on integrating individuals but not groups, and conceives of integration only in the form of assimilation. The position of the New Right has nothing in common with any of the positions that I've mentioned, insofar as the ND fights against Jacobinism, having declared itself long time ago for the a communitarian treatment of immigration.

My answer to this question is a bit long, but I cannot do it otherwise insofar as one realizes that Bar-On, when he speaks about the French New Right, seem to be literally obsessed with the problem of immigration. The reader may legitimately conclude that immigration is thus of central concern to the ND (which could thus be presented as an "anti-immigration movement"). Well, this is absolutely false. And this can be easily verified. Of the 100 books I've published, not a single one deals with immigration. Of the 2,000 articles written in the timeframe of half a century, I must have devoted five or six articles to this topic. The magazine *Éléments*, the main voice of the ND, has dedicated only one out of 150 issues to this subject over the last 40 years. As far as the two magazines of which I am personally in charge (*Nouvelle École* and *Krisis*) are concerned, neither of them has published a single line on immigration! This is quite revealing, yet Bar-On is careful not to take any note of it.

AV: What do you see as your primary achievements with regard to your metapolitical agenda(s) of the past few decades? Do you see any political or cultural effects, or do you anticipate those only in a distant future?

ADB: I don't see around any political evolution around that could be linked to the New Right activity. This is quite natural in view of the fact that the ND has always refused to intervene in the political realm itself. Its

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work, however, has had an unquestionable influence in the intellectual and cultural fields. Its own specific themes have been [the] subject of numerous debates. They have resulted in innumerable scholarly works and have stimulated the thought of younger generations. To date, more than 100 books have had the ND as a subject. They are obviously not all of equal value. The most interesting are those that resort to the method of social history of ideas, as theorized by Quentin Skinner: that is to say, those which do not limit themselves to a narrative story, built on ad hoc piecemeal information, but that also inquire into the historical conditions regarding the emergence of the ND, starting out from the principle that any theoretical production is a response to a discursive context. This is obviously not the case with Bar-On's book.

AV: What is your perspective on the answer made by Tamir Ban-On to your comments published after his article in *JSR* on the French New Right? [Bar-On's response to de Benoist's *Answer* can be found at the end of this issue.]

ADB: In his responses, Bar-On just keeps repeating what he had already said. He does not take any account of the clarifications and arguments that I had addressed to him. To justify his mistakes, he hides behind the authority of those who have committed the same mistakes as if some false information could become truthful by means of having it recopied (without realizing that one might just as well resort to the authorities of those who have expressed opposite opinions). He denies that he ever wished to write a book against the ND, yet at the same time he explicitly states that he sees no truth value in the tens of thousands of pages the ND has published over the last 50 years. If this is the case, why then be interested in the ND, other than for trying to provide a picture of it which is likely to bear prejudice against it and delegitimize it? Bar-On also continues to present as representatives of the ND some people who left the ND some 30 years ago. He presents as "friends of the ND" characters (Aleksandr Panarin), movements, or websites (Metapedia) of which I've never even heard. This is the old McCarthyist method of "guilt by association." He adds up more falsehoods when he writes, for example, that the politician Bruno Megret was a member of the ND, whereas in fact Megret has never been part of the ND, neither remotely nor closely.

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One example of his recurrent bursts of dishonesty appears in the following passage: "I remind the readers what de Benoist said in a[n] ND journal in 1985: 'A political movement is so to speak condemned to doublespeak.'" This is supposed to be a proof that I myself use "doublespeak" (which in turn would need to be "decoded" to have me say the opposite of what I think!). Well, one has only to refer to the text in question to find out that I explained, to the contrary, why the ND has never wished to become a political movement—precisely because it refuses any form of doublespeak! As another example of the same dishonesty, he accuses me of "a positive evaluation of authors that legitimize violence such as Carl Schmitt and Julius Evola." Schmitt never legitimized violence, of course. Instead, he committed himself to determine how to prevent warfare from reaching the extremes. And the main article I wrote on Evola (an article for which I have already provided references) shows essentially my disagreement with most of his political theories. It is true that Bar-On, who apparently does not fear anything, does not hesitate to present Ernst Jünger as an author "who legitimized Nazism." Well, has he read then *On the Marble Cliffs,* now reissued by Penguin Books, with a preface by George Steiner?

At times his answers reveal extraordinary naiveté. I had submitted the hypothesis that Bar-On does not know "the difference between an ontic perspective and an ontological perspective." He replies to me that "these two terms never appear in any of my work," without even realizing that he thus confirms his ignorance of those terms in question. I had said he had never bothered to contact me to ask me some questions. He responds that, toward the end of the 1990s, I wrote to him and had (kindly) sent him a number of articles and journals, as I had just learned that he was interested in the ND. Yes, I wrote to him once, at a time when I believed in his good faith, but this does not change a bit the fact that he has never made the slightest effort to sound me out about my own positions.

He then asks me a number of questions. Some are outright laughable, if not surreal (e.g., "How would the ND respond to a 9/11-like attack on European territories?"). Others are just plain naïve, only confirming his bias. I have no trouble answering them, though. Bar-On asks me if I "believe that gays and lesbians should be recognized by the state and receive same-sex benefits?" Answer: I'm not sure that the role of the state

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is to "recognize" sexual orientations, but it is clear to me that lesbians and gays should enjoy exactly the same political rights as any other citizen. Another question: "Why are there no major female thinkers within the ND? And do [you] reject equality between men and women?" Answer: I have never ceased to advocate not just the equality of men and women, but also for the recognition of the equal value of the feminine and the masculine. As for the number of female contributors to the ND, Bar-On would have never raised this question if he had bothered to take the trouble and become acquainted with Anne Jobert, Claudine Glot, Anna Posner, Annie Jacquard, Michelle Hingant, and many others! But I notice in passing that he has also carefully ignored the Jewish and Arab contributors to the ND (Pierre Barrucand, Emmanuel Lévy, Anna Posner, Daoud Boughazela, Camel Bechikh, etc.).

Bar-On remains convinced that the difference between right and left lies basically in the fact that the former rejects universalism while the latter supports it. This is a further proof of his ignorance. He obviously confuses "universalism" and "universality," just as he confuses "liberalism" and "liberty." He should read Serge Latouche, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Baudrillard, Robert Jaulin, Hervé Juvin, Jean-Claude Michéa, Charles Robin, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and a few others. He also refuses to recognize that for the ND, the only "homogeneity" that matters is political homogeneity. But it is time to stop here. It is only a waste of time trying to explain that the ND is in favor of pluralism and the protection of all minorities, both between societies and within each state, and for the attribution of the same political and social freedoms to all of our citizens, regardless of their religion, their opinions, or their origins, to a "true believer" who, against all evidence, is convinced of the opposite, to the point of seeing in direct democracy "a mechanism designed to attain homogeneity!" Being a universalist and a liberal, but very minimally a democrat, Bar-On cannot undo his pamphleteering and militant posture. With this we definitively close our discussion.

AV: Thank you for the conversation.

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