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**Taking Back Risk and Credit to Spread the Gift of Trust:
Arnaud Dandieu's Anti-Utilitarian Case for Basic Income**

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Abstract

French Personalist social critic Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933) theorized an unconditionally guaranteed citizenship income to cover basic needs as part of an attempt to apply to industrial society the anthropological model of the gift uncovered by Marcel Mauss in ethnographic data such as the potlatch. Yet for Dandieu, basic income is no philanthropic gift, but a given for all, a neutral precondition for creatively giving of oneself in an extension of trust that builds specific —e.g. business— relationships, once generic solidarity is assumed as a basis for free association. Dandieu thus maintains a dichotomy between this personal gift and the obligation it carries to allow everyone this opportunity with a starting base for entrepreneurial/creative risk. Taking seriously the pre-modern coexistence of distinct economies for daily needs and prestige gifts, Dandieu wants to undo their conflation in the international financial system of impersonal speculation, insisting “we have to take back from merchants the privilege ... they unduly monopolise”: “the element of risk and credit, which characterises genuine exchange and makes it irreducible to ... purely arithmetic equality,” and restore to it “all the complexity and efficacy of the potlatch, adapted to a society that has reached a peak of industrial evolution” by “taking back its fruitful role as divider of risks and catalyst of efforts. Thus exchange will again become ... an adventure and an act,” once basic income has made the risky gift of trust binding social agents available to all with enough security to remain personally responsible for democratic enterprise.

In *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama famously argued that history is the interplay between what Hegel called the “struggle for recognition” and “rational desire”, that is, more or less, “the rational utility maximization of neoclassical economics: the endless accumulation of material possessions to satisfy an ever-increasing set of want and needs. The desire for recognition, on the other hand, has no material object but seeks only a just evaluation of one’s worth on the part of another consciousness.” It motivates both the striking worker fighting for a better deal and the creator of a business empire earning him more millions than he can ever spend. The genius of capitalism has been to enable the conflation of the two impulses, true to the vision of “the first liberal political theorist, Thomas Hobbes, who conceived of civil society as the deliberate subordination of the desire for glory ... to the pursuit of rational accumulation.” For Fukuyama, “it seems that what has happened in the modern world is not simply the embourgeoisement of warrior cultures and the replacement of passions by interests but also the spiritualization of economic life and the endowment of the latter with the same competitive energies that formerly fueled political life.”¹

It could be argued that those competitive energies were harnessed to propel and legitimize impersonal economic processes that fed off that spiritual impulse even as they integrated and obsolesced in turn the people involved in them. What if basic material needs and the aspiration to personal recognition were better served not by fusing them as the glorified pursuit of desperate acquisition, but on the contrary, by sharply distinguishing them within a new tension between the generic and quantifiable side of economic life and the human-scale social dimension at which persons meaningfully interact by freely giving of themselves?

Such was the critical position that was defined by 1931, after several years of independent theoretical reflection, by Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933) and the other members of a French Personalist movement whose review *L’Ordre Nouveau* appeared

¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York, The Free Press, 1995, p. 360.

from 1933 to 1938, and that was continued after the war in a radical wing of the European Federalist movement, to which the Centre international de formation européenne is now heir. Related to the review *Esprit* founded by Emmanuel Mounier in 1932 that is better-known for spreading to progressive Catholic circles other versions of Personalism as a politicized existential philosophy, the *Ordre Nouveau* group gathered around its revolutionary Personalist program a motley crew of intellectuals who viewed the economic crisis of their time as but one aspect of a larger and deeper crisis of modern civilization in the full-fledged industrial era. According to its founders², the only way out of this long-term crisis was a radical socio-economic and political federalism, aimed at restoring human scale to communities, and at harnessing technology to this end, with a view to the psychological integration of the work activity of the individual, requiring its social re-organization. They thus thought of the participative enterprise as the centerpiece of a complete set of novel socio-economic arrangements that would allow it to be formed by a free association of skilled workers (be they entrepreneurs, technicians, or specialized labor). Arnaud Dandieu's psychologically based "dichotomic method" allowed him to distinguish a personal sphere of creative work from the impersonal realm of repetitive labour, which ought to be automated as much as possible, leaving a decreasing residue to be spread out over the whole of society through a "civilian service" comparable to a military service of a couple of years. This debt to society ensured that thankless tasks were not left to a single class, but also that they would still get done even when the incentive to make them one's job was removed by the parallel institution of basic income.³ For a "*vital minimum guaranteed to all*" was

² Mainly Alexandre Marc, a pioneer of the European Federalist movement; historian René Dupuis; writer and Church historian Daniel-Rops; mathematician Claude Chevalley; Bibliothèque Nationale librarian Arnaud Dandieu; historian Robert Aron; Swiss writer and Protestant thinker Denis de Rougemont. See Christian Roy: *Alexandre Marc et la Jeune Europe 1904-1934: L'Ordre Nouveau aux origines du personnalisme*. Doctoral dissertation in History for McGill University, Montreal, 1993 (published in 1999 with an afterword by Thomas Keller: "Le personnalisme de l'entre-deux-guerres entre l'Allemagne et la France" by the Presses d'Europe of the *Centre International de Formation Européenne* —C.I.F.E., 10, avenue des Fleurs, F-06000 NICE, France), as well as the entry "*Ordre Nouveau* (review and group)" in Bertram M. Gordon, ed. *Historical Dictionary of World War II France: The Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance (1938-1946)*, Westport (Connecticut), Greenwood Press, 1997.

³ The author gave an unpublished paper entitled "Civilian Service for Social Security? Basic Income and Labor-Sharing in the Thought of Arnaud Dandieu" at the VIIth Congress of the U.S. Basic Income Guarantee Network, Boston Park Plaza Hotel, March 7-9, 2008. It took up some strands of C. Roy, "La question du travail dans la pensée d'Arnaud Dandieu", in *L'Europe en formation* (organ of the Centre International de Formation Européenne, Nice), No. 309, Summer 1998, pp. 111-140. For a Franco-German comparative perspective on *Ordre Nouveau's* ideas on

meant to “radically dissociate the notion of retribution (or salary) from the notion of the satisfaction of basic needs”⁴, since it was already clear that technological gains in productivity were bound to make full-time employment increasingly unreliable as a main source of revenue, and wage labour was in itself problematic and best kept to a minimum. The idea of these new institutional arrangements was to allow technological progress to fulfill its emancipatory potential, since all members of the polity would be freed apace to engage in creative personal activities and community projects —often of an entrepreneurial nature.

Even before *Ordre Nouveau*’s founding in 1930, Arnaud Dandieu had evolved a philosophy of the person and a novel critical theory on the basis of a bold application to all areas of human experience —from religion and literature to economics and politics— of insights largely gleaned from anthropologists like Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss, particularly the latter’s *Essai sur le don* (1924), just as his Bibliothèque Nationale colleague Georges Bataille was also working out its implications. In substantial unpublished manuscripts, Dandieu’s search for a new non-essentialist “Moral of Becoming” based on pleasure as opposed to duty assumed an impulse to give spontaneously, of the kind put forward nowadays by Jacques T. Godbout, an emeritus professor of sociology at Quebec’s Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), who has been a key protagonist of the MAUSS —Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales, active since the 1980s as the hub of transdisciplinary thinking on the paradigm of the gift and its wide-ranging applications as a way to think human affairs outside the rationalist box of dominant discourses.⁵ Thinking in terms of *Homo donator* vs. *homo oeconomicus*, Godbout points out that the latter turns everyone and everything into an object, whereas the model of the gift is the only action system that

this topic, see C. Roy, “Revolution, Work, Resistance: French Personalism’s Connections with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy”, in *Culture, Theory and Critique*, Vol. 55, Issue 3, 2014 (forthcoming).

⁴ Alexandre Marc, “L’Entreprise humanisée”, in *La Vie intellectuelle*, Vol. LI, No. 4, September 30 1937, p. 543.

See C. Roy, “Humaniser l’entreprise d’après Alexandre Marc à la fin des années 1930: Convergences avec l’antiproduktivisme contemporain”, in *L’Europe en formation*, No. 355 (“Alexandre Marc’s Thought Today”), Spring 2010, pp. 87-127.

⁵ See C. Roy, “Transpositions of Mauss’ Theory of the Gift in the Personalist Social Critique of Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933)”, in Antoon Vanderveelde, ed., *Gifts and Interests*, No. 9 in the “Morality and the Meaning of Life” series edited by Albert W. Musschenga & Paul J. M. van Tongeren. Leuven, Peeters, 2000, pp. 177-189, and “La théorie maussienne à l’origine de la critique sociale personaliste d’Arnaud Dandieu”, in *Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* (Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales), No. 19, 1st semester 2002, pp. 357-371.

encourages its members to increase the freedom of others, ensuring them they are not things since they can freely give back, more even than they have received. “Any gift is a gift of oneself, which the merchant system excludes”⁶, leaving participants in a transaction theoretically even and therefore uncommitted (if it is “only business”, it is “nothing personal”), in contrast to generosity and its socializing effects, since “*La générosité entraîne la reconnaissance*”⁷, the latter word meaning in French both recognition as a free subject and gratitude as a positive debt that creates a social bond. For “in a gift relationship, the person as such is involved. S/he is not a means to an end. What circulates carries this personal element”, a part of oneself, so that “any gift is a gift of oneself and can hardly be treated as an object.” In this sense, the gift is animistic, following the law of participation described in anthropology by Lévy-Bruhl and Mauss. But by the same token, “the gift, since it relies more on trust than the market, is riskier, more dangerous, and affects the person more deeply when the rules are not respected, when one has been had.”⁸

Arnaud Dandieu began to translate these anthropological insights into economic concepts appropriate for the post-industrial era of automation in a series of articles co-written with Robert Aron on the political economy of international finance at the onset of the Depression that appeared in Romain-Rolland’s review *Europe* and in dissident Surrealist publications: Georges Bataille’s *Documents* and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes’ *Bifur*.⁹ Their themes were to be developed in their books *Décadence de la Nation française* (1931), *Le Cancer américain* (1932), *La Révolution Nécessaire* (1933), and in the *Ordre Nouveau* group’s review and its members’ other publications after Dandieu himself died prematurely at age 35 in 1933. In his testament *La Révolution Nécessaire*, he had insisted that, in order to properly understand exchange and credit, we have to take into account, aside from “measurable and purely economic elements,

⁶ Jacques T. Godbout, *Ce qui circule entre nous. Donner, recevoir, rendre*. Paris, Seuil, 2007, p. 299.

⁷ Jacques T. Godbout with Alain Caillé, *L’esprit du don*. Montréal, Boréal, 1995, p. 300.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁹ On Dandieu’s connections to Bataille, see C. Roy, “Arnaud Dandieu and the Epistemology of *Documents*”, in Issue 7: “The Use-Value of *Documents*”, of *Papers of Surrealism* (online journal of the AHRC Research Centre for Studies of Surrealism and its Legacies based at the Universities of Essex and Manchester ; paper presented at its Fourth Annual Ph.D. Symposium at Tate Modern, London, June 2, 2006), <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal7/index.htm>.

irrational ones of trust and action”¹⁰, again like Godbout in his critique of recent economic literature on trust such as Laurent Cordonnier’s writings. In his own book on *Trust*, Fukuyama also concludes that it “is not the consequence of rational calculation;”¹¹ for it “is the product of pre-existing communities of shared moral norms or values”¹², “sources like religion or ethical habit that have nothing to do with modernity”, so that the modernity’s “most successful forms ... are not completely modern”, insofar as “economic agents trust one another in their interactions and can therefore be more efficient than low-trust societies, which require detailed contracts and enforcement mechanisms.”¹³ As for Dandieu, referring to Mauss’ paradigm of competitive ceremonial giving drawn from the winter festivals of Northwest Pacific coast Amerindians, he maintained that

The study of the potlatch has only been done up to now from a historical standpoint, and the very sociologists who have attempted it seem to have deliberately kept away from the political ramifications that their discoveries could have. And yet, these may be as staggering for the evolution of modern societies as for our knowledge of primitive societies: and the study of the potlatch turns out to be extremely fertile in lessons concerning the genuine nature and the essential source of so-called economic phenomena.¹⁴

One of these lessons is that the social time of ritual gift and counter-gift precedes the disembodied atemporality of quantifiable material exchange in view of individual profit—that credit precedes both barter and cash.¹⁵ “But we should not think that this modern term covers new operations without historical precedent: far from raising as they believe above the laws of morals and history,” people like Herbert Hoover who would make credit out of nothing “suddenly return, through the abstract figures of the balance-sheets of their pyramidal trusts, to the region of ritual gift, of the assertion of power characterising the primitive magician’s naiveté.”¹⁶ Building financial empires on the psychological projection of confidence, “credit is the most developed modern form of suggestive magic. Far from returning to the exchange of concrete objects, of identical

¹⁰ Robert Aron & Arnaud Dandieu, *La Révolution Nécessaire*. Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1933; reprint with an introduction by Nicolas Tenzer, Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 1993, p. 92.

¹¹ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

¹⁴ Aron & Dandieu, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

values, we now only exchange fictitious papers, odourless and weightless, signs at the most: we are in the realm of pure abstraction where the prestige of the sign abolishes real values”¹⁷ (a point since then forcefully reiterated about today’s electronic environment in Jean Baudrillard’s economy of the sign in symbolic exchange). Thus, even in an ostensibly materialistic society, by its magical procedures, “credit, as it expands, becomes idealised. Formerly corresponding to factual realities (individual value, collective value, prosperity, fertility, gold reserve...), it now results from compliance to a certain number of theoretical rules and the establishment of some purely technical relations.”¹⁸

Dandieu sees what he calls the American “religion of credit” conquering the world with its spirit and organisation in individual as in collective life; for such American innovations as investment trusts and the Federal Reserve System needed to become universal in order for the system to be complete. Devised on an American model, effectively under American control as a powerful hegemonic tool, as forerunners of the WTO and the World Bank, “the Young Plan and the Bank for International Settlements thus constitute the crowning of the abstract edifice that rationalism has been busy building on the financial plane since the XVIth century. Thanks to them, financial operations take place from now on in a closed circle, where no external contingency is provided for. It is easy to understand why the most important men of the business world, delighted to find themselves amongst each other in a well stopped up cave, say ‘Halleluiah’ to such a result.”¹⁹ Yet “all efforts, US-based or not, to rationalise credit and separate it from its real bases, cannot prevent it from being an essentially psychological fact, exposed to the risks and hazards of affective operations,” as demonstrated by the Crash of October 1929, or more recently, by the 2008 financial crisis, joining confidence schemes about real estate debts and the hubris of abstract speculation cut-off from any reality principle. Thus for Dandieu,

There is credit and credit: the automatic credit of bankers, that of bearer shares, that of futures operations, that leads its abstract existence in stock exchanges and other caves, where facts from outside are only perceived under the guise of upward or downward trends, sometimes purely fictional, and

¹⁷ Aron & Dandieu, “De Wall Street à La Haye (Essai sur le crédit)”, in *Europe*, 22:88, April 15 1930, p. 587.

¹⁸ Aron & Dandieu, “De Wall Street à La Haye (Essai sur le crédit)”, *loc. cit.*, p. 586.

¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 588-589.

fundamentally speculative. And then there is actual credit which, firmly tied to a man's activity or a business's value, represents the chances they have of reaching their natural goals and to increase their productive power.²⁰

Big corporations that run on the spurious prestige of the first kind of automatic credit cannot truly fulfill the human need for genuine risk, nor can the State, since it is “abstract, while this risk, on the contrary, is eminently personal and spiritual. Everyone hears, in time, aside from financial bulletins, the call to his own personal risk: it is thus up to each of us, to one's friends, to one's co-workers in a trade or at the office, to spontaneously answer it so as to earn prestige. When it comes to credit, as in political matters, a decentralisation is called for, and financial federalism, which will find in trade groups, syndicates and other professional bodies its ‘great natural regions’, is as necessary and urgent to organize as the other [social and political federalism]. A society that could not accommodate this new form of credit and exchange, at once corporate and personal, would be under grave threat of both tyranny and stagnation. Each productive entity should have its own credit entity” to share in its good fortune and stimulate its flagging energies.²¹ If “to grant a credit is to colonise the future” on the strength of an accumulation of confidence (such as in the medieval crucible of capitalism²²: “festivals and fairs, in which economic transaction is only one element” according to Mauss²³), “neither confidence, nor the sun may be rationalised, even though the course of the seasons and the needs of consumption can, in a normal period, and within certain limits, seem to abide by laws,”²⁴ of the kind presupposed by “futures trading”; Dandieu would have had a lot to say about this systematic colonisation of the unpredictable spontaneity of time by the abstract space of quantifiable reversibility—the element where utilitarian exchange proliferates. For credit to be freed from its grip, Dandieu insists, “it must first wholly die, under its etatist figure just as much as under its liberal guise, in order to rise again under its genuine aspect, which is spiritual. It is only by going through this ordeal that it will find again all the complexity

²⁰ Aron & Dandieu, *La Révolution Nécessaire*, p. 140.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140-141.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 103-105.

²³ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

and efficacy of the potlatch, adapted to a society that has reached a peak of industrial evolution.”²⁵

For it would be preferable “that in life’s daily and standardised exchanges, money no longer be any more than a purely economic and abstract sign, devoid of any capacity to proliferate, of all energy and efficacy: but it is indispensable that beside this sign money may freely be born, within spontaneous, corporative and productive groupings, dynamic credit, necessary for great human adventures, similar in almost every respect to that which the clan chief has at his disposal on the day of the potlatch.”²⁶ “In the area of the regional or creative economy” set aside for the self-managed or co-operative enterprise, “it should take, thanks to appropriate forms”, “the dynamic role of binding agent uniting just as much people and things as people with each other”²⁷, so that Dandieu can conclude his chapter on “Exchange and Credit” with a vision of the potlatch “taking back its fruitful role as divider of risks and catalyst of efforts. Thus exchange will again become what it should never have ceased to be, an adventure and an act.”²⁸ Even capitalism started out this way, and still runs on the prestige and confidence associated with far-flung enterprise, blowing them out of all proportion even as it methodically dispenses with most actual involvement in adventurous acts — speculating instead on deadlines and rates; but if we just took these factors of trust and pride seriously once more, Dandieu seems to be saying, it might be possible to wrest an authentic personal existence from their mass-produced shadows, and to shun “risk-free investments” that end up putting everybody at risk. Central to Dandieu’s thought, as a “ritual act, which implies at once war and alliance, interested commerce and sumptuary feast”, “the potlatch constitutes a totality where economic elements are tightly bound up, or more precisely fused with mystical and affective elements”²⁹ such as considerations of prestige and honour, “in an unstable state between festival and war.”³⁰ “Now, the gift necessarily entails the notion of credit”³¹, says Mauss, so that for Dandieu, “we have to take back from the merchants the privilege they have stolen, and which they unduly

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³⁰ Mauss, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

monopolise, the privilege of credit.” “The element of risk and credit, which characterises genuine exchange and makes it irreducible to barter, has been fraudulently captured by them under cover of materialist theories that deny it its normal field of application by reducing exchange to purely arithmetic equality.”³²

To be sure, as Jacques T. Godbout points out, “the market has historically played a positive role by setting up a system that made it possible for people to become free of the traditional binding debt which an individual could never pay back.”³³ However, “*by becoming the exclusive model of any debt, this ability to measure, which had actually made it possible for mankind to get out of a state of negative debt, ends up preventing the acknowledgement of such a thing as positive debt,*”³⁴ like that of an on-going mutual gift relationship or credit based on personal trust rather than impersonal calculation. This is why the basic income guarantee appears to Dandieu and his followers as a prerequisite for building relations of interpersonal trust and an economy based on them, since it dispels the monetary forms of irredeemable debt. If all citizens are guaranteed enough to live on, so they are not forced to take the first job that comes along, they are better able to earn others’ trust, building up credit on the basis of their character, achievements and promise, without having to risk bringing themselves and/or their partners into a state of permanent negative debt. Real people can afford to take risks and responsibilities at whatever income level they happen to be, rather than leave this to corporate investments trusts that build up automatic abstract credit to the extent that their impact on actual social and environmental relations is shunted out of mind in the province of externalities.

Thus, in the face of the inability of the utilitarian model of exchange to deal with the decoupling of income and salaried work to which seems to lead the development of automation at the root of unemployment, Dandieu already saw the need of a post-industrial regime to “REALISE for the benefit of the whole of the community, for the personal liberation of each of its members, the power-saving that is blowing apart the old world.”³⁵ For as it supplants the full employment required by labour-intensive early

³² Aron & Dandieu, *La Révolution Nécessaire*, p. 132.

³³ Jacques T. Godbout, *Le don, la dette et l'identité*, p. 151.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³⁵ Aron & Dandieu, *La Révolution Nécessaire*, p. 88.

industry, “to constant work, but at a variable salary, rationalisation would tend to substitute irregular work, but at a fixed salary. To the financial straits of the worker whose salary is reduced, it substitutes the distress of the unemployed, whose salary is nothing, and who no longer has in front of him a boss that he can hold responsible for his misery.”³⁶ “The boss, the so-called ruling class, suffers the same fate as him. Closed factories, bankrupt businesses, are the unemployment of the boss; except that, being at the top of the ladder, he cannot blame anyone but an abstract mechanism.”³⁷ As for the more obvious victim, the unemployed, “his status is a peculiar one, entirely negative, that can only be compared to that of the dead in primitive societies.”³⁸ Dandieu takes this comparison very far in the ethnologically inspired analysis of the ambiguous relations of non-reciprocal propitiatory giving maintained by technological society towards the “economic dead” he sees in the unemployed, put in the degrading position of receiving just enough to maintain a life that is no longer life, since they cannot give anything in return; it is in the end only a matter of dispelling the threat of this hungry “ghost who haunts our shining Babels” —lurking in the shadows of their social circuits,³⁹ like the zombie hordes of the undead that loom so large in the dystopian fantasies of our own time.

Insisting on the establishment of a guaranteed basic income that would not be aimed at the unemployed upon proof of desperate need but unconditionally granted to all citizens, Dandieu clearly realised that, as Jacques T. Godbout maintains, thinking of the West’s one-sided gifts to the so-called “developing world” and other humanitarian interventions, “the negative gift is the ghost of the gift, the ghost of the positive gift.” “In such a situation, the passage from a gift to a right constitutes a major improvement,” every time the receiver is unable to give back. Indeed, undermining the recognition of one’s identity as a subject, “the danger of receiving is the main reason not to give, the one that justifies replacing the gift system by a right system or a merchant system.” This “danger of receiving” can however be neutralized by a right that founds a debt of society

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

to the recipient, since “the giver no longer gives, but gives back; and giving back is not a threat to the recipient’s identity.”⁴⁰

Dandieu insisted on a strict dichotomy between the gift proper: the one a person makes with pleasure, and the common obligation it entails to allow everyone this possibility of dignified living, be it by a civilian service to share the burden of thankless utilitarian tasks needed by society, or by ensuring to all “a certain security in life, against unemployment, sickness, old age, and death” —though not so much because “the state itself, representing the community, owes it” to the workers for their troubles, as Marcel Mauss held in arguing for the Welfare State,⁴¹ but as a general citizenship right unrelated to actual need or performance. To Dandieu, no amount of wages or workers’ compensations could ever make up for the sacrifice of the gift of life to the necessities of survival, by buying social peace for employers or the state. The personal act that is the gift cannot be converted into the currency of things or worse, their signs, unless it be through the law of participation entailed by the act itself in a social setting, the workplace and the economic system, that is bound to be highly sensitive to scale and tempo. Mauss overlooks these crucial factors when he translates his findings from traditional societies to modern states. In this respect, Welfare States are not that different from “enlightened” modern corporations. For instance, observes Dandieu, “Ford seeks to give his relations with workers an emotional and concrete basis by a high-salary policy, which happens, by a trick that may not be conscious, to bind them more closely to the abstract system of the factory,”⁴² as does the consumerism designed to drive production and profit for their own sake by multiplying dubious needs.

This is why, as *Ordre Nouveau*’s founder Alexandre Marc put it, working out Dandieu’s legacy in pointing to the connection between basic income and the new, post-capitalist forms of “humanized enterprise” it would enable:

The primacy of money must be abolished so as to allow workers —*all* the workers: entrepreneurs, technicians, laborers— to associate freely within free enterprises. But in order for this freedom of association not to be a mere

⁴⁰ Jacques T. Godbout, *Le don, la dette et l’identité*, pp. 147-148.

⁴¹ Mauss, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴² Aron & Dandieu, *La Révolution Nécessaire*, p. 217.

rhetorical formula, it is necessary that a certain equality —that has nothing to do with egalitarianism— exist between the future co-associates.⁴³

Marc ultimately called for “genuine co-operative charters associating all human elements of the enterprise to the risks, the responsibilities, the profits”, through “*proportional* retribution.”

Tomorrow’s entrepreneur will therefore have at his disposal only a fraction of the total profits, a fraction defined by the enterprise contract. Thus, a real solidarity will exist between all the workers (in the widest sense of the term) associated in the same task, responsible for the life of the enterprise, having parallel, if not identical interests. It will then no longer be a matter of throwing the modest veil of corporatism on realities that partly justify the doctrine of the class struggle: the classes as castes will have breathed their last, and *the proletarian condition will in effect have been suppressed*.⁴⁴

This sounds a bit like the “economics of partnership” in the *Agathotopia* of the Nobel Prize-winning Cambridge economist James Meade (1907-1995), who proposed it as a way of transcending the shortcomings of the Keynesian Welfare State for which his work paved the way. It provides for a combination of capital shares and labour shares within the enterprise, the latter entitling the workers to a proportional dividend on profits in addition to their fixed salary and to a basic “social dividend” or citizenship income. It is no coincidence that these views of James Meade have been championed in Italy by a disciple of Alexandre Marc, Edwin Morley-Fletcher, a founding member of the Basic

⁴³ Marc, “L’Entreprise humanisée”, *loc. cit.*, p. 543. Responding on March 19 1935 to a letter from Marc of March 10 about his article “L’idéal historique d’une nouvelle chrétienté” in *La Vie intellectuelle*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, January 25 1935, pp. 181-232, the influential neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain agreed that one could find in it a point of contact with Ordre Nouveau’s idea of a basic income:

Quant aux biens élémentaires dont il est question p. 218, je suppose, à la seule inspection des termes, qu’il s’agit là de la même chose à laquelle vous pensez en réclamant “la garantie de la satisfaction des besoins vitaux” ou “la base de départ assurée à tous”. Il est clair que le niveau de ces biens varie suivant les états de civilisation. L’essentiel se rapporte au pain et au toit, au minimum de biens matériels nécessaire à l’exercice de la vertu, —et au minimum de biens intellectuels nécessaire à ce même usage. (Unpublished Marc papers, currently housed, along with many of Dandieu’s, at the European University Institute archives in Fiesole outside Florence.)

This idea of a basic income (*minimum vital*) was popularized for a largely Catholic readership in 1937 by the young writer and future Church historian Henri Daniel-Rops, one of Ordre Nouveau’s founders and its most efficient spokesman, in his book *Ce qui meurt et ce qui naît*, excerpted on this topic in the Dominican review *La Vie intellectuelle*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, January 31 1937, pp. 207-221, and reviewed by Christian Ducasse in Vol. XLIV, No. 3, May 15 1937, pp. 467-473.

⁴⁴ Marc, “L’Entreprise humanisée”, *loc. cit.*, p. 547.

Income European Network, who was then a top executive of both the Lega nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue and the former Communist party.⁴⁵ Even before Ordre Nouveau dropped the name “corporation” (fast becoming loaded with right-wing associations) for the type of firm it envisioned, it underlined how the personal sharing of risk in a common work enterprise set it apart from most existing capitalist models:

—The O.N. Corporation extends the partnership to all the people taking part in the running of the business, from the director to the skilled worker. —Only the servile workforce provided by the Civilian Service will not participate in the life of the enterprise.

As we see it, the prominent features of the general partnership that give it an Ordre Nouveau quality are the following:

The people who associate freely are not very many; they are known to each other; they are wholly committed not only for the value of their contribution, but for the entirety of their belongings; their responsibility is total;

They manage their business themselves, there is neither anonymity nor abstraction; they are people in direct contact with the firm; they work; they *risk*. — They have nothing in common with the Administrator of limited companies who manages without responsibility, nor with the Shareholder who partially owns without managing or working, nor with the Silent partner who lends his money and denies his person.⁴⁶

In the 1937 leaflet *Pour un Ordre Nouveau, Pour une France Libre*, under the heading of “*ECONOMIC FREEDOM*”, this aspect is the first to come up in answer to the question “What does Ordre Nouveau want?”:

1° Human distribution of risk: instead of it being entirely on the side of financing and tantamount to speculation, that it rest on every man in the enterprise in proportion to the importance of his role.

⁴⁵ See by C. Roy in the Montreal-based “transcultural magazine” *Vice Versa*, No. 29, May-June 1990, pp. 30-32: “Genève - Rome - Budapest: Idées pour l’Europe nouvelle”, on echoes of early Personalist blueprints for guaranteed income in contemporary socio-economic thinking, followed by an interview with Edwin Morley-Fletcher in No. 41, April-May 1993, pp. 10-11: “Rome Revisited: Idées nouvelles pour l’Italie, de la fin du marxisme à la fin du craxisme”. For Meade, “the Agathotopians have devised institutions which rely very largely on self centred enterprising behaviour in a free competitive market but which, at the same time, put great stress upon co-operation between individuals in producing the best possible outcome and upon a compassionate attitude to those who would otherwise lose out.” (*Agathotopia: The Economics of Partnership. A Tract for the Times Addressed to All Capitalists and Socialists who Seek to Make the Best of Both Worlds.* Aberdeen, The David Hume Institute, Aberdeen University Press, 1989, p. 1.)

⁴⁶ Jacques Dalbon, “Germes « Ordre Nouveau » I. —De la Société en nom collectif à l’Entreprise Corporative”, in *Bulletin de liaison des groupes « Ordre Nouveau »*, No. 1, April 15 1935, p. 1, reproduced in Annex III of Aron, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-284, where it is followed by the second instalment of “Germes « Ordre Nouveau »” from May 1935 entitled “Crédit coopératif et crédit Ordre Nouveau”.

2° Grouping of co-operative enterprises of the same production sector in order to fight against the Big Corporations [*les Trusts*] or the State.

3° Constitution within this grouping of Co-operatives of an organ for Mutual Credit either in kind (supplying machines or semi-finished products) or in cash where the rigid contract for a loan against interest will be replaced by a flexible participation contract. This form of association constituting the best weapon in the fight against the Banks.

This statement is interesting in that it shows that *Ordre Nouveau* did not wait around for the full revolutionary establishment of the civilian service and other new institutions Arnaud Dandieu had called for, but tried to launch or support working models of them as alternatives to the capitalist system, be it risk-sharing enterprises or a volunteer test-run of the civilian service in factories of Paris and Beauvais.⁴⁷ There are even tantalizing hints of an “Experiment in Vital Minimum underway in a Paris suburb, and ensuring the unemployed basic necessities outside of any capitalist or speculative profit” —with the help of local Puteaux co-operatives.⁴⁸ This involvement of co-operatives in a basic income experiment originating in civil society and independent of the state may be seen as a fitting symbol of the twofold anti-utilitarian rationale for citizenship income in the Personalist thought of Arnaud Dandieu and his *Ordre Nouveau* group, namely, on the one hand, as a defence against the destructive effects of negative debt and the fear of it on human subjects, whether it be as proletarian vulnerability or as welfare benefits, and on the other hand, as a secure basis for engaging in the struggle for recognition through the extension of credit as the positive debt of the gift of mutual trust binding social agents in their very freedom to take creative personal risks. By giving to all enough security to remain personally responsible for democratic enterprise, basic income thus allows everyone to make his/her distinctive mark in the very act of initiating new common ventures in open contest, freeing up the deeply rooted spiritual energies of the potlatch as the wellspring of a rehumanized post-industrial economy.

⁴⁷ See C. Roy, “Des germes d’une économie à hauteur d’homme” [about case studies of participative enterprises and labour-sharing in the *Bulletin de liaison des groupes « Ordre Nouveau »* (1935-1937)], in *Entropia, Revue d’étude théorique et politique de la décroissance*, No. 15, Fall 2013, pp. 119-133.

⁴⁸ Robert Aron, “Problèmes ouvriers”, in *Bulletin de liaison des groupes « Ordre Nouveau »*, No. 13, July 1 1936, p. 2.