

can be obtained only through local contact, and this either immediately or mediately, i.e., through a material medium that is again in immediate contact with both agent and recipient. If such contact does not exist, the bodies cannot influence one another. Moreover, while an inactive medium can register place and relative direction, it cannot determine an event that originates from one body and influences another at a particular time and with a particular intensity. Thus, when a medium is involved, it must play both an active and a passive role in the bodily interaction.

This argument is metaphysical in the sense that it presupposes the validity of such concepts as action, being, and causality, all of which are verifiable in ordinary experience without recourse to the experimental and conceptual developments of modern science. Those who reject metaphysics, of course, do not subscribe to an argumentation of this type (*see* METAPHYSICS, VALIDITY OF).

Physical Arguments. Physical proofs of the impossibility of action at a distance attempt to show that, as a matter of fact, such action does not take place in the physical universe. For this purpose, one may classify actions as either chemical, or mechanical, or those involving some type of field interaction. Regarding chemical activity, it seems generally agreed that chemical interaction occurs only if reagents are brought into contact, and thus there is no action at a distance. Again, if physical action is transmitted mechanically, either by streams of particles or by collision of macroscopic bodies, there is no action at a distance. This leaves only actions associated with field concepts—among which may be enumerated electricity, magnetism, electromagnetism, gravity, and nuclear and other forces—for detailed discussion.

One characteristic of such actions is their dependence upon the distance between agent and recipient, as, for example, the magnitude of the gravitational force between bodies being inversely proportional to the square of their distance. Again, in the case of the electric and magnetic phenomena, intermediary bodies can exercise influence, as in shielding effects. Moreover, such actions are propagated with a finite velocity, and the implied dependence on space and time is incompatible with action at a distance. Yet again, the existence of standing waves and of radiation quanta cannot be explained solely in terms of empty space. Finally, a field theory itself is opposed to the concept of action at a distance. Fields have properties that differ from point to point and that are describable in terms of potentials; they also contain a definite amount of energy. Thus they function as operational media and have a degree of reality corresponding to the action they transmit. Whatever phenomena urge scientists to admit the action of a field also urge the acceptance of a medium that supports such activity.

Such arguments, while not absolutely conclusive, argue strongly against the hypothesis of action at a distance.

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[W. A. WALLACE]

ACTION FRANÇAISE

Action Française (A.F.) is the name of a political league and its journal that attempted, during the first four decades of the 20th century, to reestablish the monarchy in France.

Program and Influence. A first committee of A.F. was born in 1898 during the Dreyfus affair. It was transformed in 1905 into a league of A.F., which proposed to combat every republican regime and to re-establish the monarchy. It edited a biweekly periodical, called *L'Action française*. (1899–), and in 1908 launched a daily newspaper, with the same name. An institute of A.F. took charge of doctrinal propaganda. Charles MAURRAS was the unquestioned head and the theorist of the movement, which counted several other very talented leaders, such as Léon DAUDET, Henri VAUGEOIS, and Jacques BAINVILLE.

A.F. was never a mass movement, and played only a minor legislative role, although Daudet was for a time elected a deputy, but its intellectual influence was considerable, especially among Catholics. Although its principal directors were atheists, they believed that if French society was to prosper as it had in the past, it must return to both the political form and the religious practice of earlier times. The Church quickly became disturbed by the organization's influence over a section of the French clergy and faithful. Its journal taught that political laws proceed from experience, and that the national interest has an absolute primacy in moral matters. Its young partisans grouped under the name "camelots," and swore to promote royalist restoration by any means whatsoever. In brief, it was a political school whose concepts derived from a naturalist view of man, society, and religion; and this intellectual outlook obliterated the moral sense of its members in their concepts of foreign and domestic politics.

Attitude of the Church. Because of the complaints of French bishops, the Holy Office prepared a prohibition of seven books by Maurras, and the periodical, but not the newspaper, of the movement (Jan. 26, 1914). Howev-

er, A.F.'s combat against anticlerical republicans and its struggle for a conservative type of Catholicism then in favor at the Vatican produced interventions in its favor at Rome. As a result, Pius X (1903–14) suspended publication of the decree. Benedict XV (1914–22) adopted the same attitude because of World War I. Pius XI (1922–39) received new complaints as a result of an investigation that revealed the extraordinary ascendancy of the movement over Belgian youth, and asked Cardinal Andrieu, Archbishop of Bordeaux, to publish a letter of disapproval, which appeared on Aug. 25, 1926, and received papal approbation. The *Osservatore Romano* printed articles on this subject to which A.F. replied violently, branding the editors a “small band of demoniacal agents,” and pretending in an article entitled “*Non possumus*” that treason and parricide were being asked of it. A decree of the Holy Office (Dec. 29, 1926) published the text of the 1914 condemnation, and added to it, with the ratification of Pius XI, the newspaper *L’Action française* “as it is published today” because of articles written “these recent days especially . . . namely by Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet, articles which every sensible man is obliged to recognize as written against the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff himself.”

Reacting with fury, A.F. vilified the *Osservatore Romano* as “*Diffamatore Romano*,” and “an infamous rag”; resurrected all the familiar specters of anticlericalism, such as Galileo, St. Bartholomew’s Massacre, Alexander VI, and the Borgias; and accused the pope of being the victim of a plot to restore the Holy Roman Germanic Empire. This led Bishop Ruch of Strasbourg to classify *L’Action française* the most anti-clerical newspaper in France.

Subsequent to the condemnation of Dec. 29, 1926, the Holy See published other documents that fixed the manner of treating the unsubmissive. Priests were forbidden to administer the Sacraments to them and were threatened with canonical sanctions if disobedient. Marriages of the rebellious were merely to be blessed in the sacristy, like mixed marriages. Dying rebels must make honorable amends or be deprived of the last rites, and go to their graves without the Church’s prayers.

Several French bishops remained sympathetic to A.F., and at first refrained from commenting on the Roman condemnation or made very fine distinctions in their observations. Undoubtedly at the Holy See’s demand, a long declaration appeared with 116 episcopal signatures (Mar. 8, 1927), but without the names of three bishops. One of these was later regarded by the Holy See as having resigned. Sanctions were taken against important ecclesiastics, such as Cardinal BILLOT, who was removed from the Sacred College and went to finish his

days at the Jesuit novitiate in Gallora. Priests suspected of favoring the movement were gradually removed from influential posts, especially those dealing with young people. Jacques Maritain, in collaboration with P. Doncoeur and four other ecclesiastics, published a book defending the Holy See, *Pourquoi Rome a parlé* (1927). Maurice Pujo replied to it in a series of articles later gathered in book form as *Comment Rome est trompé* (1929), which drew from V. Bernadot and five authors the reply *Clairvoyance de Rome* (1929). Some bishops closed their eyes, but others applied the sanctions rigorously. Many cases gained notoriety and with the passage of time contributed to building hopes for a gradual appeasement of the affair. Some interventions occurred in Rome. Maurras wrote to Pius XI (January 1937), and received a reply. He then wrote two more letters to the Pope. Their correspondence made it clear, however, that their viewpoints remained irreconcilable.

The pontificate of Pius XII (1939–58) opened new perspectives. After long negotiations, the directive committee of A.F. sent a letter to the pope expressing their sincerest sorrow for anything in their polemics and controversies that had been injurious and even unjust. The Catholics on the committee rejected all their erroneous writings and every precept and theory contrary to Catholic teachings. Pius XII had not demanded the type of retraction required by his predecessor, but the text signed by the committee constituted an implicit retraction since it admitted that the prohibition’s motives were just.

The Holy See triumphed in the end, for Catholic youths ceased joining the movement. Its defeat became more evident when the Duke of Guise, pretender to the throne, disassociated himself from A.F. (Nov. 1937). In 1944 the liberation government forbade the publication of *L’Action française* because of its attitude during World War II.

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[A. DANSETTE]