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**Title: Jules Romains' vision of a united Europe in interwar France: legacy and ambiguities.**

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**Abstract:**

The interwar period in Europe was characterised by a multi-faceted movement in favour of European integration. After the slaughter of the First World War, many intellectuals, writers, industrialists and politicians brought the idea of European unity to the fore and engaged in various actions, from setting up organisations to lobbying governments, to promote the unification of Europe. Much research has been carried out on the leading figures of these pro-European activities but amongst the wealth of this period other actors have tended to be forgotten. Such is the case with the French writer Jules Romains, who not only coined “Europeanism”, the word that would define the whole movement in favour of Europe, but who also actively participated in promoting a united Europe. This article seeks to introduce and discuss Romains' ideas on Europe. It will demonstrate that his vision was very coherent within the framework of his Unanimist philosophy but was undermined by serious ambiguities. It will also demonstrate that his ideas are of great interest for what they reveal about the interwar period in France and Europe, what they bring to the genealogy of the European project, as set up after the Second World War, and for the ambiguities at the core of his concept of Europe, which are still very much at the heart of many of today's debates about the European Union.

## **Jules Romains' vision of a united Europe in interwar France: legacy and ambiguities.**

### **Introduction**

The period between the two World Wars in Europe witnessed a multi-faceted movement in favour of European unity, with a flurry of organisations, activities, and writings (Chabot 2005; Den Boer et al. 1995; Duchenne 2008; Pagden 2002). The idea of uniting Europe was debated in previous centuries, from St Pierre's perpetual peace (1713) to Kant's project for a universal peace (1795) or Victor Hugo's call for the United States of Europe (1819).

However, whilst in the past such calls were those of a few intellectuals, in contrast, the years after the First World War were characterised by concerted efforts from a much wider range of individuals and organisations to promote the idea of a united Europe, from intellectuals to politicians and industrialists (Dethurens 2002; Saint-Gille 2003; Spiering & Wintle 2002).

This groundswell in favour of a United Europe culminated in the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand's proposal to create 'a kind of federal link' presented at the League of Nations in 1929, followed by his famous memorandum on the organisation of a federal union in 1930 (Heater 1992, 133-146). The rise of Nazism in the Thirties led to a progressive loss of impetus, as Europe edged towards war (Chabot 2005, 204-206).

Many books and articles have been written on these pro-European activities in the interwar period (Chabot 2005; Duchenne 2008; Heater 1992; Muet 1997; Saint-Gille 2003; Stirk 1989). They have tended to focus on leading political figures, such as Briand, leading organisers and organisations, in particular Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and his Pan-Europa or leading intellectuals such as Valéry. With such a rich period, it is relatively easy to forget individuals who contributed to promoting a United Europe, but who are now consigned to brief mentions in books on this period. Such is the case with the man who coined 'Europeanism', the word that would define the interwar movement in favour of European unity, as early as 1916. This man was the French writer Jules Romains (1875-1972). After the

war he became renowned worldwide both as one of the best-selling authors in interwar France and as an intellectual activist, deeply involved in the debates of the day through his participation in various organisations (Pan-Europa, international PEN club, International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation), and numerous conferences. His fame steadily waned after the Second World War and his reflections on Europe nowadays are, to a large extent, only briefly cited in books and articles on this period.

Yet, Jules Romains not only sang Europe's praises in his poem *Europe* and advocated a United Europe in *Pour que l'Europe soit*, both written in 1916, at a time when war hysteria was raging (Den Boer et al. 1995, 64) and only a handful of intellectuals spoke against the war (Antoine 2002), but from then on he would become a tireless supporter of the European idea throughout his fictional and non-fictional work, his articles for the newspaper *La dépêche de Toulouse* in the Thirties, his involvement in the debates of the time, and his political activism which led him to seek to influence leading political figures in France and Europe, as narrated in his book *Les sept mystères du destin de l'Europe* (1940), making him an extremely committed European activist.

This article seeks to re-examine Romains' thoughts on Europe in order to contribute to the growing body of work on the forefathers of European integration. It argues that his vision for Europe, fuelled by his Unanimist philosophy and extremely coherent from this point of view, was undermined by serious ambiguities and a lack of precision that his call for good will could not fully conceal. It further argues that his reflections, viewed through three lenses, are of great interest: historically for what they reveal about the inter-war period in France and Europe; politically for the genealogy of the current European integration; ideologically for highlighting the difficulties surrounding the very concept of 'Europe' still present in many of today's debates. The article will address Romains' idea of Europe during the interwar period, focusing on what Europe is, why Europe should be united and, finally, how this should occur.

## The European illumination

As a young man, Romain Rolland felt deeply alienated from society and his early writings revealed a pessimistic and misanthropic vision of history: ‘Les nations courent après un rêve de Bonheur; dès qu’elles croient l’atteindre elles s’écroulent. C’est un signe des temps et un symptôme funeste pour la France’ (Guyon, 1981, 87). This led him to sympathise with nationalist ideas (‘Le nationalisme, cet admirable sursaut de l’âme française’ (Guyon 1981, 87)), as put forward at the time in France by Paul Déroulède and his League for the French Nation. He radically departed from this early stance in 1903 when he was struck by the sudden overwhelming feeling of belonging to humanity, in the famous illumination he experienced in Rue d’Amsterdam, when he felt that the crowd did not consist of isolated individuals but had its own existence and its own soul, as explained in his poem *La vie unanime*: ‘Les hommes / ressemblent aux idées qui longent un esprit./ D’eux à moi rien ne cesse d’être intérieur;/ rien ne m’est étranger de leur joue à ma joue; et l’espace nous lie en pensant avec nous’ (Romain Rolland 1908, 47). A new philosophy, Unanimism, was born, based on the idea that individuals were not ‘islands of solitude’ (Romain Rolland 1933c, 230) but that they could fuse with any given group, which he called a Unanime (230). Each Unanime is integrated with one another in ever wider circles, from a group of friends to the reunion of everybody in a universal catholicity:

Alors soudain sans le savoir, sans qu’on y pense, / on sera sûr qu’un homme est tué quelque part / [...] et je devinerai qu’un être me réclame / pour que j’aspire sa conscience de loin / [...] chaque homme percevra que sa chair, à lui, meurt / que le sang coule de la bête collective / c’est le dernier espoir, le meilleur, je le garde/ [...] il faudra bien qu’un jour on soit l’humanité (Romain Rolland 1908, 123-127).

Unanimism not only revolutionised Romain Rolland’s outlook on life and society (Cuisenier 1969; Rony 1993) but is key to understanding his attitude towards Europe. Indeed, a journey

through Europe in 1911-1912 led him to experience it as a Unanime, with its own soul. When reminiscing about this discovery of Europe, Romains explained (1950, 430):

J'eus, d'un bout à l'autre, dans ce compartiment solitaire un compagnon: le sentiment d'Europe. Il ne faisait pas de phrases. Il ne prenait même pas la peine de me montrer le paysage qui défilait: il se contentait d'être là.

From then on, Europe's beauty was constantly praised (*Europe*, for example, is a declaration of love for all the towns, mountains, rivers he had seen whilst travelling) and its woes during the war lamented with stark and angry images ('Europe! Europe! Je crie / ne te laisse pas mourir / cramponne-toi, crispe toi/ reprends ta vie dans un spasme / écrase le dieu terrible' (1916, 68)). Europe in the immediate aftermath of war is depicted as being disfigured in *L'Ode génoise*, a time of misery and anger, with reminders of what it used to be ('[Gêne] sait me faire croire à des époques heureuses / où le royaume de l'homme était un rubis creusé' (1925, 184).) In the Thirties, with the imminence of ever greater perils, his anxiety led him to seek every avenue possible to stop Europe falling into a new disaster (1935a, 185-197; 1940). Romains' Europe was not an intellectual construction but was intimately felt as a Unanime. However, what does Romains understand exactly by 'Europe'?

### **What is Europe? Unity in diversity.**

Romains' answer rested on a dialectic between national diversity and Europe's fundamental unity. Despite their differences, all the Europeans countries were a fragment of a nation (Romains 1933a, 23) which united them and explained their evolution.

Diversity is apparent in Romains' strong belief in the existence of national types. Europe's various nations are described as races and their differences are stressed with a technique that was prevalent in the interwar period (Jennings 1999, 214): folk psychology, the idea that

peoples have their own psychology, which defines them and makes them unique. The most striking example in Romain Rolland is his study of the Germans, just like many French intellectuals of his time, following in particular Jacques Rivière and his hugely influential book *L'Allemand* (1918). Throughout his writings, Romain Rolland developed a German ethnotype based on two characteristics: irrationality, as illustrated by German romanticism, which he claimed went the furthest away from reason (1933a, 37) and a love for order (Romain Rolland 1946, 262). The contradiction between the two leads to unpredictability and untrustworthiness ('Elle se moque des contrats, des signatures [...] quand il s'agit d'un ennemi, le contrat est vain. [...] On ruse, on triche. [...] C'est ce que nous appelons, nous, la mauvaise foi allemande' (Romain Rolland 1934, 53).) These characteristics made the Germans unique and radically different from any other nations, such as France's majestic elegance, Britain's poetry and wisdom or Spain's perpetual tensions (Romain Rolland 1946, 261).

For many authors, such as Henri Massis, stressing national differences was meant to reinforce nationalism and this was precisely what Romain Rolland himself thought in his early years.

However, following his Unanimist illumination he set out to demonstrate that European countries had their own individual characteristics but were all part of the same bigger whole, i.e. Europe:

Tout homme qui a voyagé en Europe, [...], n'a qu'à s'interroger [...] n'a-t-il pas senti que les divers pays qui la composent ne sont désormais que des provinces, chacune riche et fière, sans doute, de ses traditions et désireuses à bon droit d'en garder la parade, mais des provinces néanmoins, c'est-à-dire des fragments d'une patrie? (Romain Rolland 1933a, 23)

All these intrinsically different countries shared common characteristics which not only united them as European but also explained their evolution. First of all, their geographical layout underlined Europe's unity:

Qu'il s'agisse de la disposition des principales chaînes de montagnes, de la distribution des bassins fluviaux ou du système des voies ferrées et des voies navigables artificielles l'Europe forme dès maintenant une société continue assise solidement sur un ensemble géographique (Romains 1933a, 22-23).

The 'joints' of Europe, rivers such as the Rhine or the various mountain passes were particularly stressed (Romains 1916, 33), as they united Europe geographically.

The second and main characteristic was a common civilisation, superior to any other found across the world. Indeed, all Europeans belonged to :

Une civilisation qui n'était plus, de toute évidence, une civilisation parmi d'autres, qui était le résultat suprême et convergent des efforts de l'esprit humain, la plus haute tentative de l'espèce pour s'éloigner de la condition primitive (Romains 1946, 250-51).

He set out to show that this common civilisation derived from being blessed with the twin spirits which, borrowing from Nietzsche, he called Apollo and Prometheus: 'C'est ainsi qu'il y avait deux variétés, deux crus de l'Esprit qui depuis des siècles poussaient là et nulle part ailleurs: l'esprit apollinien et l'esprit prométhéen' (Romains 1946, 243). The Apollonian mind referred to arts and spiritual activities and, for him, it reached its apex amongst Europeans: 'chez elle seule, les produits supérieurs de l'esprit avaient atteint ou dépassé leur constitution adulte' (245). Thus, he believed that no-one had ever surpassed the Europeans in terms of literature, painting, music, or philosophy (245-47). Not only were Europeans blessed with an Apollonian mind but they combined it with the Promethean material and practical mind, which led to unparalleled technical and economic development, ensuring domination over all other peoples (248).

This commonality of mind amongst all Europeans could be found in their similar economic, social and political development, their common critical attitudes towards religion and the State, as demonstrated by the power of religion being curtailed and by the various revolutions

in Europe to overthrow despots, as well as in their attitudes towards society itself, with the same quest for justice, as illustrated by the development of Socialism (Romains 1946, 255). He acknowledged that the pace and timing might have been different from country to country but he posited that all of them went through these developments, through Europe's 'pact' with these two minds (257).

Finally, Europe's fundamental unity could be seen from the viewpoint of the colonised world, for which Europe was one. For Romains, the benefits brought to the colonised were the same everywhere, irrespective of which European country was the coloniser. Europeans led other peoples and created a new order by introducing civilisation (Romains 1946, 250-251).

All in all, Romains considered that both in terms of geography and civilisation as well as in the eyes of the colonised, Europe, despite its diversity, was one. This explains why, in his poem *Europe*, he presented his body as being attached to France but his mind to Europe (1916, 10). This also explains why he could consider the First World War as a civil war:

Je soutiens que la guerre européenne de maintenant a plus d'un point commun avec la guerre de sécession des Etats-Unis. L'une et l'autre de ces guerres présentent le caractère essentiel d'être un conflit armé à l'intérieur d'une civilisation homogène. [...] Les adversaires se haïssent et se cherchent avec cette passion excessive qui n'éclate qu'entre proches parents. Une guerre proprement dite, entre deux peuples vraiment étrangers l'un à l'autre, a quelque chose de plus froid, de plus impersonnel (1933a, 19).

The identity of Romains' Europe can be defined as essentialist, in a Fichtean-like vision of a European nation based on a common culture, geography and history (Llobera 2003, 189).

Whereas, using Renan's subjective definition of a nation based on a shared destiny, it could be shown that shared experiences gradually created a European consciousness, Romains, on

the contrary, seemed to suggest that it was precisely because they were Europeans that all European nations shared the same experiences and that national identities derived from the same general European matrix. It can be argued, to use Edgar Morin's concepts of culture and civilisation (1990), that Romains ascribed culture, in other words the individual characteristics of a society, to nations and civilisation, what can be transmitted, to Europe. However, it can also be argued that Romains took this hypothesis further and defined Europe as a Unanime with its own soul, by suggesting that European civilisation derived from a common mind and then spawned national cultures. This essentialist and Unanimist vision, however, is extremely problematic, both in the many unanswered questions it creates and its lack of conceptual clarity.

### *The ambiguities of Europe*

The first difficulty in Romains' thinking is the definition of a geographical entity called Europe. During the interwar period, various attempts were made to define Europe's borders, which were not successful, as too many interpretations were given. For some, such as Coudenhove-Kallergi (1923), Europe had to exclude Britain, because of its empire, as well as Russia and Turkey because they were not wholly on the European continent, which was opposed by many others, such as Woytinski (1927) or Sforza (1929). Others such as Heerfordt (Du Réau, 2008, 83) or Hauser (1926) included every nation defining itself as European or with a European heritage. The same inability to define European borders can be seen in Romains' writings. First, where Europe started was not clear. He mentioned that Europe was attached to Asia:

L'Europe touchait à l'Asie, s'appuyait et se confondait à l'Asie par la région épaisse, étalée, relativement peu différenciée et peu sensible de sa structure. Et c'est de l'autre côté qu'elle poussait les prolongements [...] les péninsules, les paquets serrés de peuples, les grappes de villes. (1946, 235)

However, this definition is extremely vague and begs the question as to where Asia ends and where Europe begins, as well as what happens with countries that might straddle both. At one point he mentioned that Europe extended from the Urals to Gibraltar, from Thrace to the Hebrides (1946, 289), however, in other writings, he included Russia in Europe (1946, 280), which defies this definition of Europe starting from the Urals. Second, where Europe ended was not clear either, as he talked about the New World in America as the New Europe, 'son prologement au-delà des mers' (1946, 250), which seemed to suggest that Europe was where Europeans were and yet in *Pour que l'Europe soit* he told Americans that he was turning to them because they did not belong to Europe. A precise definition of Europe's borders cannot be found and his geography appears intuitive, something that, as a traveller, he could feel, as illustrated by his numerous amorous description of Europe's morphology, but upon close inspection it unravels.

The second difficulty in Romain's arguments is his essentialist definition of European civilisation. The idea of such civilisation was not unique to Romain and can be traced back to the XVIIIth century (Den Boer et al. 1995, 59), with recurring themes based on the Christian, Greek and Roman heritage, liberty and liberal political principles (Pagden 2002; Den Boer et al. 1995). All interwar intellectuals agreed that the European mindset was the product of a common history (Muet 1996, 48) and they shared many similar references, such as critical mind, Greek political concepts, universalism, reason or science (Spiering & Wintle 2002, 23-27). However, the content of this civilisation varied, from Valéry's three matrices that were Greece, Rome, and Christendom (1919) to Hauser's stress on the Reformation

(1926), from Berdayev's stress on the Middle Ages (1924) to Huizinga highlighting Humanism (1934). If the concept of European civilisation was prevalent it did not receive a universally shared definition. Romain's attempt could be seen as providing an overarching definition but it has to be described as an inoperable myth. By defining European civilisation as the child of two minds, he created a catch-all concept able to encompass any aspect of European history and to subsume any differing interpretations, with Apollo embracing all the spiritual, political and intellectual developments and Prometheus the economic, technical and material ones. However, this definition was too vague to be operable: to say that Europe existed because it was fuelled by two European minds did not explain what made them European, why they were specifically European or why all Europeans should have been infused with them in the first place. In addition, this vision brushed aside many differences amongst Europeans. Religion, for example, might have been pushed into the private sphere in France but that was not necessarily the case for every European country. To say that all Europeans experienced the same evolution was an extremely sweeping statement and Romain did not prove his point. His two minds acted as a unifying factor for the concept of European civilisation but were impossible to prove and could have easily been replaced by 'Gods' or any other special attributes. That is why it can be argued that Romain participated in what Delanty (2005) called the myth-building of European identity, i.e. the creation of an imaginary community (Costoriadis 1975), based on unverifiable tenets and an elusive content.

This elusiveness of European civilisation was compensated by the use of the colonised Other to confirm the existence of a European self, through the creation of a firm boundary between an 'us' and a 'them', insiders and outsiders (Bauman 1990). By following a well-established tradition of identifying Europe as the superior civilisation, which can be traced back to the Encyclopaedists in the XVIIIth century (Pagden 2002, 117) down to the French Republic

justifying colonisation (Wieviorka 2005), Romain reinforced the sameness of the European self. It can be argued that Romain's Europe had a solid base only through the use of the 'barbarian' Other who, as so often in the construction of European identity (Delanty 1995; Hall 1992), acted as glue for an identity difficult to pinpoint internally.

Overall, Romain's vision was extremely coherent from a Unanimist point of view. Europe was an entity very distinct from other groups, with its own specific mind. However, its inner identity unravelled upon close scrutiny and Europe was left only negatively defined as opposed to a barbarian Other. Nevertheless, his vision is of great interest historically, for the light it casts on how Europe was commonly defined as the superior civilisation and how colonialism was commonly endorsed and from an ideological point of view, by highlighting the difficulty of the very concept of Europe and European identity, when looked at closely. It is only necessary to look at the debates sparked by Turkey's desire to join the EU to see that where and what Europe is still lack definition today. With vastly different definitions of Europe elicited from these debates, from being a Christian club to embracing any country expressing the wish to be part of it, from being contained within a very strict geographical area to encompassing any country with a European heritage (Tekin 2008), Europe still remains deeply elusive today.

### **The unification of Europe**

After defining the unity of Europe, Romain went further with a call for its unification, explaining why and how that should be achieved. His first justification was common to every reflection on Europe at the time (Spiering and Wintle 2002), in the aftermath of World War I, peace: 'une nouvelle guerre serait un désastre total. [...] Elle marquerait pratiquement la fin du monde occidental' (Romain 1934, 48). This is accompanied by the idea of a special role

for Europe, which was to lead the world towards unification. This is the ultimate circle of Unanimism, the creation of a universal Republic : ‘O mon rêve entre tous / O République universelle [...] / ce que je veux avoir, sans à peu près, sans tricherie / c’est le rassemblement enfin de l’univers terrestre / une catholicité vraiment tendue et totale’ (1938, 108). This rested heavily on a colonialist vision: Europe already dominated the rest of the world, either directly or indirectly through its ‘sons’ in the New World, therefore the last hurdle before a universal Republic was for Europe to unify:

Si l’Europe eût trouvé le secret de s’unir [...] ce qu’elle eût adressé aux autres peuples de la terre c’eût été non un ultimatum mais une invitation, au besoin quelque peu pressante, d’entrer dans un pacte universel, celui que la paix de Versailles avait tâché d’instituer, mais qui restait un avorton paralytique tant que l’Europe n’était pas unie. (Romains 1946, 289)

This casts Romains amongst the universalist trend of European thinkers, such as H.G Wells or Harold Laski (Spiering & Wintle 2002, 41-42). However, Romains viewed pure internationalism as ‘une formule abstraite qui ne se définit qu’en s’opposant aux nationalismes’ (Romains 1933a, 57) and saw Europeanism as ‘l’affirmation la plus réaliste qui soit’ (57), thus anchoring internationalism on a solid basis first.

This universalist vision led, however, to unanswered questions, in particular how this Republic would be achieved. The League of Nations could have been seen as a way forward, as illustrated by Dahriman (1929) or De Jouvenel (1932), but Romains displayed scepticism. He did not oppose the League but he did not believe it was an effective forum to preserve peace, let alone to usher in a universal Republic. He criticised in particular its lack of instruments to address problems, such as an army, and its lack of legitimacy due to its bureaucratic and diplomatic nature, which led nations to think about their own interests only (Romains 1933b, 90-92). The unification of Europe was presented as a way to surpass these problems but it begs the question as to why the non-colonised countries would have wished

to be part of it. His vision was so grounded on the implicit idea of European supremacy that such considerations were never discussed. At a time when many intellectuals were deploring the decline of western civilisation (Demangeon 1920; Spengler 1926; Valéry 1919), it is remarkable to see how Romains simply seemed to assume that the mere fact of achieving unification in Europe would naturally lead to a Universal Republic and therefore failed to elaborate on the process. That explains, however, why he focused so much on how to unite Europe.

### ***How to unite Europe***

At the heart of his reflection lay the idea that Europe was poisoned by its history, which prevented its peoples from realising they were Europeans. European identity had been buried under the construction of national identities, based on the rejection of the other nations:

Chaque européen qui vient au monde est neuf par sa chair mais il est vieux parce qu'il hérite à sa naissance de procès séculaires, qui n'ont jamais été vidés, qui ne le seront jamais parce qu'il est voué, sans discussion, à l'accomplissement de vieilles vengeances (Romains 1933a, 26).

The aggressive nation-building process prevented Europeans from realising that they were part of the same civilisation and fostered instead the creation of hereditary enemies, ready to jump into a new war: 'L'Europe de 1915 est en proie aux fantômes. De très vieux songes se sont emparés d'elle et l'ont dressée dans un délire de somnambules, des songes dont plusieurs remontent du fond des siècles' (Romains 1933a, 24). To this analysis, shared by many others such as Coudenhove-Kallergi (1923) or Simmel (Spiering and Wintle 2002, 30), Romains added the social conflicts born out of the industrial revolution, leading to hopes for a social revolution and reaction against it. These internal conflicts further removed any consciousness of European unity (Romains 1946, 272). Romains, therefore, posited that external and

internal conflicts acted as some kind of screen, blinding Europeans from their intrinsic unity. To achieve unification, these ancestral fears would have to be surpassed through a European socialisation programme, which he first presented as early as 1916.

Europe would only be united when its various peoples actually wanted to be European: 'Le point capital, c'est que le plus grand nombre d'hommes possible, dans chaque Etat de l'Europe, prennent conscience et affirment que leur premier besoin, leur première revendication se nomme l'unité européenne' (Romains 1933a, 56). What Romains described was similar to Renan's subjective idea of a nation, in other words the building of a collective identity. This is a contradiction, since his definition of Europe was based on Fichtean objective theory. It could be argued, however, that his view was an example of how the two could be merged: Europe will exist if people want it to be (subjective). They will want to if they are shown to share the same characteristics (objective). The creation of individual nations veiled Europe's fundamental unity, which therefore had to be made explicit to all Europeans, hence Romains' emphasis on how to foster this common consciousness.

First, he believed that the war itself could be a catalyst to make Europeans realise how absurd internecine conflict was, forging a way forward for Europe (1933a, 19-20). If that failed, the millions of victims would act as a reminder and the deep traces left by the war had to be used as a message for peace and unification (Romains 1925). However, this was not enough, because war could easily lead to hatred and revenge and because peace would not naturally lead to the unification of Europe if nationalism held Europeans back. Hence the necessity for a robust socialisation programme, led by men of 'good will', who would be responsible for propagating the European message, in order to get Europe used to being one (Romains 1933a, 57).

He suggested creating a European party whose sole programme would be European unity and whose role would be to spread the European message and create in all Europeans an obsession for Europe (57). Its members would defend the European point of view on all issues, in all countries, via all possible means (57). This party would not have any specific programme except Europe itself and would have four pre-requisites: a European central bank, a customs union, a postal union, and a monetary Union (56). Romaines did not believe in a detailed programme but in general directions (56), because once Europeans became aware of themselves, the ways to implement their unity would automatically appear (56). The existence of a European party did not mean that traditional parties were rejected but Romaines believed that because Europe was only one point in their programme at best they would not be as efficient as a party dedicated to Europe (54-55). Similarly, he did not believe in diplomacy because diplomats remained prisoners of nationalistic, or at least national, points of views (54).

The European party would be supported by various other awareness-raising methods. The poet's role was to sing Europe and keep the idea burning (Romaines 1916, 40). The intellectual had to convince and argue (Romaines 1935b, 28). Teachers, the hussars of the French Republic (Ozouf & Ozouf 1992) became hussars of Europe, to transform a national consciousness into a European one and promote the Universal Republic (Romaines 1938, 138). Finally, Romaines called on anybody, at any level to spread the message, for example by supporting politicians who promoted Europe (1934, 125).

Several observations can be made about Romaines' socialisation program. First, it is deeply influenced by his Unanimist philosophy which stresses the need for a group to become aware of itself (Cuisenier 1969, 20) through creative individuals, who ignite a spark, and is based on the idea that individuals are able to act on the world and transform it (Romaines 1934, VII). Second, he can be seen as a precursor of what many inter-war organisations put forward in

the Twenties, from the Movement for a European customs union to Pan-Europa who stressed how vital it was to rally public opinion around European ideas (Kallergi 1923) or Julien Benda (1933) who wanted to fix Europe in Europeans' hearts and minds. It has to be highlighted that this programme written during the war for an American newspaper was not published then because it was deemed too pacifist (Rony 1993, 235). It was only published in 1930, thus limiting any direct influence it could have had on the immediate post World War I thinking. However, from a genealogical point of view, Romain's programme has to be seen as one of the earliest fully-fledged European socialisation plan.

Indeed, it was designed to foster a new loyalty amongst Europeans and to operate what many researchers feel is needed to spawn a new identity, that is to create changes in 'the abstract, psychological and symbolic links in which the production and reproduction of loyalties and sentiments occurs' (Paasi 2001, 9) in order to elevate national identities to a higher level (Hassner 1997; Linklater 1997). Romain gave a very good illustration of this process, implementing the same tools used by countries to create their own identities (Paasi 2001), including education, the media, legitimising discourses, political organisations, and a constant reminder of being part of a nation. The only one he refused was violence, so widely used in the creation of national identity, both real and symbolic (Llobera 2003; Shore 1993). It can be argued that a vision based on good will and non-violent persuasion was ill adapted to the deeply entrenched nationalism of his time (Chabot 2005, 292-302) and it may appear unrealistic in retrospect. However, this very developed socialisation programme needs to be added to the abundant proposals made during the interwar period (as discussed in Chabot 2005; Du Réau, 2008; Spiering and Wintle 2002), which paved the way for the route taken after the Second World War. Numerous similarities can be found, from Romain's idea that Europeans must get used to working together, echoed in Robert Schuman's speech when launching the European Community of Coal and Steel (1950), to the necessity to defend a

European point of view everywhere, reprised in Monnet's statement that national issues must be transformed into common European issues (Duroselle 1974, 12), or the emphasis put, right from the start of the European project, on education (Petit 2006, 664-678), which is reminiscent of the role Romains ascribed to teachers. This does not mean that a direct link from Romains to the fathers of the European construction can be established but it does mean that he is of great interest for the genealogy of actions implemented after the Second World War.

The third observation is that the integrationist scope of his programme was breath-taking, as a monetary union would have automatically led to substantial loss of sovereignty. However, as Romains claimed that, once united, Europe would find a way to organise itself, no details about its future organisation were outlined, which left aside how national sovereignties would be managed. Romains advocated the 'sublimation' of national feeling as opposed to its suppression: 'C'est en ce sens qu'il m'apparaît nécessaire pour les états nationaux de procéder au plus vite à ce que j'appellerai une sublimation de l'idée nationale. Je ne dis pas suppression mais sublimation' (1935a, 187). However, this concept was not explained and did not tackle the issue of national sovereignty, which proved so crucial in this period.

Indeed, the extreme care Briand took in his Memorandum to reassure his counterparts that their sovereignty would not be affected by his proposals (Heater 1992, 135), which still failed to convince European states (Heater 1992, 143), illustrates the strength of national sovereignty in the interwar period (Chabot 2005, 292-298). Romains' Unanimist vision of a group of individuals, in this case Europeans, becoming aware of themselves and organising themselves, thus naturally breaking down national barriers, was coherent. However, by aiming to foster a desire for Europe without explaining what it was going to be like Romains ignored the power of national sovereignties and made mass mobilisation for a vague future difficult.

All in all, Romain offered a fully-fledged programme to unify Europe but his Unanimist belief in the power of self-awareness led him to leave aside the organisational aspect of any future United Europe, thus limiting its potential mobilising impact and making it appear unrealistic in retrospect. The socialisation programme outlined by Romain was meant to create a desire for Europe and unity. However, it would fail until what Romain considered the main obstacle to European unity, namely the Franco-German feud, was not resolved.

### ***Franco-German reconciliation***

Romain presented France and Germany as the spearhead of European unification. It is 'la pierre angulaire de la paix européenne, ou l'axe des futurs Etats-unis d'Europe' (1933b, 89). This Franco-German bias was based on the idea that, as all political crisis in Europe had involved them both, harmony was impossible if the Franco-German issue was not solved (1933b, 65).

This stress on Germany is typical of interwar France, where the German question was paramount (Bariety 1987; Valentin 1991). A whole spectrum of policies was found at that time, ranging from revenge to cooperation, via containment and appeasement, as illustrated by the decision to occupy the Ruhr in 1923 to Briand and Stresemann's cooperation to appeasement policies in the Thirties (Bernstein 2011). Romain argued for reconciliation as early as 1916 (1933a, 58) and repeatedly called for a policy based on genuine dialogue, to put an end to the conflicts between the two countries. For true reconciliation, hostility towards Germany had to cease and be replaced by dialogue. This is why he criticised interwar French policies, in particular containment in the Twenties and early Thirties, as such attitudes would only increase Germany's distrust. Any policy other than dialogue was presented as likely to lead to another war (1934, 122).

The reconciliation policy had to continue even with Hitler because he might be ‘le fou de la maison’ (Romains 1946, 288) he was still European, therefore dialogue remained possible. Romains did not think that Europe could be united with Nazi Germany because any union had to be based on democracy (Romains 1936, 1) but he believed that dialogue to avoid a new war was possible, and that led him to criticise Hitler’s opponents and victims, such as the Jews or the Socialists, for sabotaging any chance of dialogue and peace, by spreading a negative image of Germany. He stated that it was better to talk to Hitler and save Europe, rather than condemning his actions in the name of ideals and contributing to a new war. Thus, whilst stating that he understood how nauseating Hitler’s anti-Semitic policy was, he argued that ‘il faut que les passions les plus légitimes sachent se taire quand les intérêt qui les dépassent sont en jeu’ (1934, 78) and even though France should defend refugees from Germany, their hostility to the Nazi regime was harmful, because they jeopardised the development of true dialogue.

Romains’ attitude has to be linked to his deeply entrenched pacifism, the same pacifism that led him to oppose World War I (“Je trouve absurde de mourir pour une cause à laquelle on ne croit pas” (1933d)). Preserving peace was preserving Europe, permitting possible unification at a later stage, once dictatorships had disappeared. War was a bigger evil than Nazism, hence his anger at those who wanted firm actions against Hitler:

Qu’ils osent regarder leur propre pensée en face! Ont-ils envie de déclarer une ‘nouvelle guerre du droit et de la liberté’? Si même ils ne prennent pas sur eux de la déclencher, se feront-ils les complices des forces qui la déclenchaient? (1934, 76)

He was not unique in this attitude. Horne (2009) analysed how France underwent a demobilisation of its wartime culture in the Twenties, replacing it with a rejection of war itself and Prost highlighted how “the whole of France was pacifist and this pacifism was the reason France did not oppose Hitler earlier” (1994, 210). Romains’ statements about refugees

echoed the Ligue internationale des combattants pour la paix who were alarmed by the anti-German and pro-war propaganda they were spreading (Ingram 2004, 323). Romaines can therefore be seen as a good example of the pacifism and what has been called the “war anxiety” (Hucker 2007) of large sections of the French population and politicians at the time, spawned by the horrors of the First World War. Peace was more important than defeating fascism (Vaisse and Adamthwaite 1993) and any action designed to prevent war was to be applauded. His integral pacifism, however, was replaced by a combative version when it became clear to him, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, that his calls for dialogue had failed and he advocated that democracies should stand firm and refuse false dialogue (1960, 26-27).

Romaines’ focus on France and Germany as the bedrock for any future European unification was fully coherent with his socialisation process of breaking down the historical barriers between Europeans. His call for dialogue, until this policy was proved unfeasible, was also coherent with his belief in the capacity of good will to overcome any obstacles. This Franco-German bias, however, begs the question as to why other European countries would have necessarily followed suit if France and Germany had succeeded in their reconciliation. In addition, his reliance on good will and dialogue failed to cope with aggressive nationalism. Added to the limits in his socialisation programme already outlined this casts his programme as very coherent from an Unanimist point of view of awareness-raising actions but utopian in its inability to deal with the importance of nationalism, from the mild version of defending national sovereignties to the extreme form of bellicose behaviour. However, historically, it is an illuminating example of the German issue in interwar France and from a genealogical point of view, it provides a very developed example of actions that would be implemented after the Second World War.

## **Conclusion**

Romains can be called a 'total' European: he eulogised Europe's beauty, fought for its unity, provided a rationale for its existence and a programme to achieve it. His ideas may lack conceptual robustness and unravel upon close analysis but they are nevertheless of great interest for analysts of the history of European integration. His ideas might not have been implemented at the time but they are an example of the seeds that would be reaped after the Second World War.

Culturally and historically, they illustrate various aspects of the France of his time, an era marked by psychology of the peoples, ethnocentrism, colonialism and an obsession with Germany. Politically and ideologically, his ideas represent a very good insight into the interwar European debate: the internationalist trend, non-violent measures to raise awareness, emphasis on education, attempts to find a European civilisation and define it, creation of a European 'us' versus a colonised 'them', craving for peace, and craving for Europe to find a role in the world. His ideas also give some clues as to why this groundswell in favour of Europe ultimately failed: the vagueness of the programme, the inability to grasp the depth of both nationalism and national sovereignty leading to an inability to implement the socialisation programmes put forward, as well as the ambiguities as to what Europe was and what it should be.

Ultimately, Romains illustrates the difficulties of the very concept of Europe. The vagueness of his European geography, his incomplete programme once Europe was united, the conceptual difficulties of his concept of 'European civilisation' all echo the current problems of defining Europe. Many attempts have been made to define Europe, give it borders or prove that it has an identity and content. They have varied over the years (Delanty 1995), the borders have been drawn and redrawn (Tunander et al. 1997), the aims of European unity

have varied (Paasi 2001, 9), the idea of the very existence of a European identity has been challenged (Delanty 1995; Shore 1993) and the ideal organisation of Europe is still very much unclear (Llobera 2003). Romain epitomises the mercurial nature of the concept of Europe, an idea that has been invented and reinvented throughout the ages and which remains elusive today.

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