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Chapter 1 : Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement

This intellectual portrait of Romain Rolland ()--French novelist, musicologist, dramatist, and Nobel prizewinner in focuses on his experiments with political commitment against the backdrop of European history between the two world wars.

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Chapter 2 : Romain Rolland and the Politics of the Intellectual Engagement: 1st Edition (Paperback) - Routledge

Romain Rolland's earliest experiments with intellectual engagement were objectifications of the oceanic feeling. Romain Rolland's background was Catholic, provincial, and petit bourgeois. Descended from a line of notaries, Romain Rolland was born in the small, sleepy village of Clamecy on 29 January

Nietzsche says somewhere that only that which has no history can be defined. I will offer no definition of the intellectual in this book. Rather, I propose to investigate the evolution of intellectual engagement in the context of twentieth-century European history, focusing primarily on the period from to Recent scholars of modern French intellectual life have emphasized its negative aspects or have categorized several aspects of the phenomenon. In *The French*, Theodore Zeldin ironically advised "how not to be intimidated by their intellectuals. Raymond Aron focused on the alienation of French thinkers from their own social origins and political ideology. Michel Foucault designated two intellectual traditions: This intellectual portrait reflects three years of rewarding research in Paris, where I frequented libraries for sources that are not available in America. After working on this intellectual portrait for over a decade, I am convinced that one writes a biographical study out of either an intense idealization or an equally powerful need to denigrate the subject. My attitudes toward Romain Rolland have oscillated between overestimation and unfair criticism. Time, distance, self-analysis, and constructive criticisms from outsiders have helped me strike a complex balance that emphasizes tensions. My perspective clearly tilts toward a critical appreciation of Romain Rolland the man and of his dilemma in finding an engaged position pertinent to his era. Romain Rolland does not assume every conceivable committed stand, especially if one were to allow for a fascist form of engagement,[3] for left-wing Catholic forms,[4] for anarchist or libertarian Marxist forms,[5] or if one conceived of engagement as encompassing a broad spectrum. He also attempted to salvage and rethink the humanist stance for the man of letters. The polemic appears to be the crucial framework within which intellectual life takes shape. The style of French intellectual discourse is both more ideological and rhetorical than equivalent forms in English-speaking countries. There are a common idiom and common assumptions among disputants. There are established ways of disagreeing, even of excommunicating someone who errs egregiously or who commits intellectual treason. He penned one of the most consequential correspondences in modern European intellectual history, well over sixty volumes of which twenty-five have already been published in selected editions. His letters are often eloquent and intimate. They are almost always oriented toward promoting intellectual dialogue. The public outpouring was matched by private autobiographical musings: Commitment occurs at this interface, where intellectual activity impinges on the political structures and struggles of the day, and politicized action transforms the contours and choices of those living a life of the mind. Chapter 2 will illustrate his oceanic sensibility. The oceanic feeling turned on a metaphysical notion of the wholeness of human beings, their inherent capacity for heroism, and their ability to take an ethical stance and to establish amorous bonds with other people and the environment. He would not relinquish the oceanic feeling as circumstances changed or as he evolved new styles of commitment. Gandhism extended his role as antiwar dissenter during the Great War and sharpened the pacifist and anti-imperialist discourses in which he trafficked during the s. Chapters 7 and 8 map out his formulation of an intellectual antifascism and his subsequent merger of antifascist resistance and an effective form of political action. It determined his commitments during the Popular Front era, his repudiation of pacifist theory and practice, and his growing sympathies for international communism. The relationship of writing to commitment was dialectical. He could be engaged and disengaged at the same time. At moments, he was almost totally disengaged. His various languages of engagement were inextricably linked to the circumstances of Europe and the world. He was committed while thinking critically about the problematic of commitment. To be engaged is not to be married to the politics of dogma or blind faith. The politics of his intellectual life serve to raise questions about the function of culture and morality and its intersection with politics in the twentieth century. Romain Rolland

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summed up his version of intellectual engagement in one brilliant dialectical phrase: In fact, Freud had Romain Rolland specifically in mind when he reflected on the uneasiness of man in modern civilization: There are a few men from whom their contemporaries do not withhold admiration, although their greatness rests on attributes and achievements which are completely foreign to the aims and ideals of the multitude. One might easily be inclined to suppose that it is after all only a minority which appreciates these great men, while the large majority cares nothing for them. He presented Romain Rolland as someone who used authentic standards of judgment and sought neither power, position, nor money for himself. He participated in cultural production while appreciating the widely divergent ideas and contrasting methods of inquiry of others also involved in the work of civilization. His writings were pleasing and exalting to his readers. His plays, novels, biographies, and essays were recurrent sources of consolation. Nor did it spring from a naive faith in the omnipotence of ideas or in the soothing but illusory ideals of beauty. Rather, it was anchored in struggle and adversity. He had the courage of his convictions—an attribute that was especially telling when he was confronted directly or challenged in a crisis. He affirmed idealistically the possibility that love and good will could be extended to all of humanity. Romain Rolland received this homage precisely because he asked profound, if elusive, questions. Just as he understood the limits of available knowledge, so too did he recommend further research and reflection to expand what was knowable. His ideas escaped facile labels, simplistic categories, or mechanistic refutations. His audience lived with or against his perceptions, welcoming the invitation to enter into dialogue with him. Romain Rolland replied in a letter on 5 December, coining the phrase "oceanic feeling" and describing it in evocative, vitalistic imagery: Your analysis of religions is fair. But I would have liked to see you analyze spontaneous religious feeling or, more exactly, religious sensation. I understand by that—quite independently of all dogma, of all Credo, of every Church organization, of every Holy Book, of all hope in a personal survival, etc. The sensation is, as a matter of fact, subjective in character. I, myself, am familiar with this sensation. Throughout my whole life I have never lacked it; and I have always found it a source of vital renewal. Thus I carry on simultaneously, freely and smoothly, a "religious" life in the sense of this prolonged sensation and a life of critical reason which is without illusion. I add that this "oceanic" feeling has nothing to do with my personal aspirations. Personally, I aspire to eternal rest; survival has no attraction for me. But the sensation that I feel is thrust upon me as a fact. It is a contact. The oceanic feeling was connected with an energy that surpassed traditional categories of time, space, and causality. It transcended limits, empirical boundaries, and scientific definitions. It had nothing to do with organized religion or faith in personal salvation. It promised to be a spontaneous source of action and thought that might regenerate decadent Europe and the underdeveloped nations of the world. It ended the separation of the self from the outside world and from others, and it allowed the individual to participate in higher spiritual realms. Romain Rolland attributed the sensation to a primeval force in all people, nothing less than the divine inner core of existence. It had the quality of perpetual birth; it was an idea-force that could mediate between human beings as they were and as they could become. Because the sensation fostered relatedness among individuals, it could break down the barriers of class, ethnicity, nationality, gender, culture, and generation and so lead to universal fraternity in the distant future. It was the basis of religious experience: It propelled the individual to make amorous bonds with other humans and the universe. Romain Rolland asserted that the oceanic sensation contained enormous imaginative possibilities, providing the artist with reservoirs of inspiration and unconscious sources of creativity. It unified the works of literature, music, and humanistic culture. Exploration of the oceanic feeling could lead to new forms of self-discovery and self-mastery, to the purification of ideas, and to insights about the nonrational foundations of being. It did not neatly fit into the theoretical frame of his writings on religion. He denied the hypothesis that the oceanic feeling was at the root of religious beliefs. The oceanic sensation was rather related to a primitive, preverbal period of ego development. The sublime feeling of fusion with the universe reflected sensations of early childhood, when the infant distinguished imperfectly between the self and the external world. Oceanic feelings were powerful forms of consolation for the precariousness of human existence. In the final analysis, Freud viewed the oceanic sensation as largely a regression to a childlike state

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in which the subject had no conception of self as differentiated from individuals or from the environment and in which an ecstatic feeling of well-being was experienced. It was related to the function of the ego whereby the self could be extended to embrace all of the world and humanity—a "limitless narcissism. He wrote to Romain Rolland: We seem to diverge rather far in the role we assign to intuition. The oceanic feeling expressed his deepest longing for wholeness and for visceral relationships. Harmony, synthesis, reconciliation, infinity, and unity were other words chosen to express the oceanic. He used water imagery to condense this jubilant state of well-being into one symbol. I belong to a land of rivers. Now of all rivers the most sacred is that which gushes out eternally from the depths of the soul and from its rocks and glaciers. Therein lies primeval Force and that is what I call religion. Everything belongs to this river of the Soul, flowing from the dark unplumbed reservoirs of our Being, the conscious, realized, and mastered Being. From the source to the sea, from the sea to the source, everything consists of the same Energy, of the Being without beginning and without End. Three major agencies of the oceanic sensation can be identified in his prewar writings: Descended from a line of notaries, Romain Rolland was born in the small, sleepy village of Clamecy on 29 January Clamecy is in Burgundy, miles southeast of Paris. The long history of this picturesque and sweet countryside is an endless source of local pride and tradition. His parents were reliable and conscientious folk; like other notaries in small communities, they were respectable and conservative.

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Chapter 3 : Romain Rolland and the Politics of the intellectual Engagement - David James Fisher - Google

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He would cast these ancestors in Colas Breugnon He received his degree in history in and spent two years in Rome, where his encounter with Malwida von Meysenbug "who had been a friend of Nietzsche and of Wagner" and his discovery of Italian masterpieces were decisive for the development of his thought. In he was appointed to the first chair of music history at the Sorbonne , he also directed briefly in the musical section at the French Institute in Florence. As a humanist, he embraced the work of the philosophers of India "Conversations with Rabindranath Tagore " and Mohandas Gandhi. Rolland was strongly influenced by the Vedanta philosophy of India, primarily through the works of Swami Vivekananda. He was not indifferent to youth: Jean-Christophe, Olivier and their friends, the heroes of his novels, are young people. But with real-life persons, youths as well as adults, Rolland maintained only a distant relationship. He was first and foremost a writer. Assured that literature would provide him with a modest income, he resigned from the university in Romain Rolland was a lifelong pacifist. He was one of the few major French writers to retain his pacifist internationalist values; he moved to Switzerland. In Rolland and Hungarian scholar, philosopher and natural living experimenter Edmund Bordeaux Szekely founded the International Biogenic Society to promote and expand on their ideas of the integration of mind, body and spirit. His life was interrupted by health problems, and by travels to art exhibitions. His voyage to Moscow , on the invitation of Maxim Gorky , was an opportunity to meet Joseph Stalin , whom he considered the greatest man of his time. During the occupation, he isolated himself in complete solitude. Never stopping his work, in , he finished his memoirs. He also placed the finishing touches on his musical research on the life of Ludwig van Beethoven. *The Man and His Works*. Zweig profoundly admired Rolland, whom he once described as "the moral consciousness of Europe" during the years of turmoil and War in Europe. Zweig wrote at length about his friendship with Rolland in his own autobiography in English *The World of Yesterday*. Hermann Hesse dedicated *Siddhartha* to Romain Rolland "my dear friend". Rolland attempted to put his theory into practice with his melodramatic dramas about the French Revolution , *Danton* and *The Fourteenth of July* , but it was his ideas that formed a major reference point for subsequent practitioners. Rolland indicts the bourgeoisie for its appropriation of the theatre, causing it to slide into decadence , and the deleterious effects of its ideological dominance. If we were happier and freer we should not feel hungry for theatre. *Correspondence with Freud* [edit] saw the beginning of a correspondence between psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and Rolland, who found that the admiration that he showed for Freud was reciprocated in equal measures Freud proclaiming in a letter to him: Freud opened his next book *Civilization and its Discontents* with a debate on the nature of this feeling, which he mentioned had been noted to him by an anonymous "friend". This friend was Rolland.

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Chapter 4 : Shop Romain Rolland And The Politics Of Intellectual Engagement

Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement David James Fisher UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS Berkeley · Los Angeles · Oxford.

Table of Contents Publisher's Note 1. Telemann A Forgotten Master 7. Metastasio The Forerunner of Gluck 9. Gluck and Alceste Handel The Man The Musician Mozart According to His Letters Portrait of Beethoven in his Thirtieth Year Wagner A Note on Siegfried and Tristan Hugo Wolf It embraces some of the finest writing on music by Holland and y perhaps as an inevitable corollary, it represents some of the best musical writing of our generation. Few writers on music anywhere and in any period brought to their task Hollands seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of culture, Ms im mense musical scholarship. That such treasurable writing on music should be out of the reach of the average music lover that, indeed, so many music lovers of our day should be un aware of its very existence seemed an insufferable situation crying for remedy. The preparation of this volume for publication brought back to mind the all-too-few occasions upon which I had the opportunity to meet and speak to Rolland. The first time was in Though he was sixty-six years old and in poor health, he seemed to have retained a healthy balance and an almost youthful tolerance. His musical tastes were still expansive. If he had violent prejudices of any kind, he did not reveal them. It seemed that he preferred to speak only of his enthusiasms and his enthusiasms for music were still many and varied. He stitt had an extraordinary attachment for the music of the seven teenth and eighteenth centuries, about which he had written so many brilliant essays. Jet his passion for the very old did ix x Romain Rolands Essays on Music not obfuscate his enthusiasm for the very new. If he was now too tired and too sick to hear new scores or to study them, he had certainly lost none of his curiosity about them. At the time I first met him he was preoccupied with the subject of Beethoven, about whom he had completed two vol umes of what he hoped would be a definitive study. It was his lifes ambition to see this monument to Beethoven completed, and he jealously conserved his time and energy for that task. In his old age he found solace and comfort and happiness in the company of Beethovens music

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He has published three books: Bettelheim: Living and Dying; Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement and this book. He has published articles on the points of convergence of European cultural history and the history of psychoanalysis, including essays on Lacan, Foucault, Sartre, Camus, Fenichel, Spielrein, and Bettelheim.

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This intellectual portrait of Romain Rolland (1866–1918) "French novelist, musicologist, dramatist, and Nobel prizewinner in 1915" focuses on his experiments with political commitment against the backdrop of European history between the two world wars.