JEAN MONNET – THE APOLITICAL FOUNDER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY PROJECT

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Abstract. Included in the mandatory gallery of the founders of the first European community, Jean Monnet is a distinctive figure. One aspect that draws attention regarding his personality, in relation to the scale of the political stakes of the European project, is Monnet's openly apolitical and unaffiliated profile. A critic of nationalism as a source of rivalries between states, Monnet refused any political affiliation throughout his life, although, from the point of view of his choices regarding the first European community, he was a supporter of dirigisme, without entering into a decisive contradiction with the idea of the market. In his endeavors to unify Europe, he believed that all democratic parties could be engaged. However, this equidistant a-politicism in the service of the European unification project is not without political connotations.

Keywords*: Jean Monnet; European Project; Action Committee for the United States of Europe; Political Vision*

The beginning of the European construction reflects an underlying political vision of the organization of Western Europe, in the context of the ideological, economic, political and military rivalry of the two major powers located on either side of the Iron Curtain – the USA and the USSR. Supported and even "urged" by the USA, European construction was driven by the vector of economic integration, initially limited to sectors, then expanded in the form of a common market, because an explicitly assumed political European unification was impossible to implement in an extended and explicit formula. Behind this compromise, the political objective was both the frequently stated one, to prevent fratricidal war between European states, primarily France and Germany, through common institutional frameworks, and to demonstrate the capacity to articulate a European power in the post-World War II bipolar world order. In its evolution, on this sectoral economic foundation, the political dimension of the European project has become increasingly evident, through the articulation of political forces such as European parties, through the functioning of institutions called supranational, the European Commission and the Court of Justice, but also through the

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Europeanisation of economic activities via numerous European regulations, through the free movement area, and a certain idea of belonging that European citizens manifest, even critically, while living in the EU.

The academic literature of the field shows that this political vision had, in the immediate post-war period, Jean Monnet as its main supporter and promoter, whose repeated and tenacious efforts have been the subject of many studies either favorable or critical of his actions. Neither the idea of the necessity of European unification nor that of a sectoral pool for the extractive industry belong to him exclusively, these proposals, projects and hopes impregnating the spirit of the era through the ideological contribution of a distinguished group of thinkers and politicians, but the concrete effort in April-May 1950, under the pressure exerted by the USA on France to find a federalist-type solution for the organization of Western Europe, is linked to Monnet's name. The Schuman Declaration was born from the embryonic draft that Monnet developed in several versions in the early days of May 1950, alongside a small team, with essential contributions to the final form, which became famous, of the document signed by Minister Schuman.[1]

Included in the mandatory gallery of the founders of the first European community, Jean Monnet, however, makes a special note. One of the aspects that draws attention regarding his personality, in relation to the scale of the political stakes of the European project, is Monnet's declared apolitical and unaffiliated profile. We would add the criticism Monnet makes of nationalism, as a source of rivalries between states, criticism that blends with the choice for this neutrality towards political affiliations.[2]

An enlightened despotism[3] governed the creation of communities, and indeed the concrete realization of communities involved impressive legal and economic expertise, subsumed to the political objective of the project. Monnet, however, positions himself between these universes – that of political decision and that of technical expertise – and from this perspective his visionary a-politicism is all the more interesting as it ultimately acquires a real dimension of political power. How did Monnet play the card of this personal political neutrality, given the continuous proximity to French and international political circles, and the commitment to community building?

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[1] Antonin Cohen, «Le plan Schuman de Paul Reuter. Entre communauté nationale et fédération européenne», *Revue française de science politique*, no. 5, 1998, pp. 645-663, www.persee.fr.

[2] Jean Monnet, *Mémoires,* Fayard, 1996.

[3] Yves Bertoncini, "Le temps des «Fils fondateurs»", *Le Débat* 2003/1 n° 123, Editions Gallimard, pp. 71-87, p. 71, https://shs.cairn.info/revue-le-debat-2003-1-page-71?lang=fr. This enlightened founding despotism, Bertoncini points out, made way for an institutional, technical, obscure, inefficient and rigid despotism, which the cited author criticises, urging the current generation of European leaders to make an effort to refound the European project along the lines of a political vision, not an excessively practised technicality in daily functioning. It should be noted that both the issue of excessive bureaucratisation and the difficulty of supranationalism, the impossibility of restraining national interests, and the nationalist revival in many EU countries are subjects that may seem strictly contemporary, but a look back shows their relevance and reality right from the beginning of European construction. About this effort and the political meaning that was given to the community construction, we can recover data and interpretations from Monnet's close collaborators, see for example Paul Reuter (1980), «Aux origines du plan Schuman», Pierre-Henri Teitgen *et al*., *Mélanges Fernand Dehousse*, Paris-Bruxelles, Fernand Nathan-Labor; Paul Reuter, «La conception du pouvoir politique dans le Plan Schuman», *Revue française de science politique,* juillet-septembre 1951, www.cairn.info; Pierre Uri (1991), *Penser pour l'action. Un fondateur de l'Europe*, Editions Odile Jacob, Paris.

Having entered the sphere of politics and international relations from the sphere of private business, of family business, Monnet avoided affiliation with any party throughout his life. He was known for a certain skill in avoiding established hierarchies, as well as for a transnational vision[4], a cosmopolitanism that claimed to surpass narrow national frameworks. Although he held important national and international public positions – vice president of the inter-allied supply committee during the First World War, assistant secretary at the League of Nations, commissioner of the France reconstruction and modernization plan, then first president of the High Authority of the ECSC – Monnet is not a typical politician, attached to a program in the classical and easily defined sense of the term, but rather what Kaspi called 'the first federal officer of the New World'[5].

His entry into the sphere of public affairs is linked to the idea of organizing Allied Franco-British naval supply during the First World War, an idea that the very young Monnet presented in 1914 to Prime Minister R. Viviani as a personal contribution to the war effort, given his medical inability to enlist. The Prime Minister directs him to the Minister of War, A. Millerand, who in turn sends him to London to implement it as part of a Franco-British team. This joint coordinated effort is interpreted by specialized literature as an early and perhaps not fully conscious application of the supranational mechanism. From this beginning, Monnet will remain in close proximity to political decision-makers, as well as in connection with business, financial, and academic circles with whom he will collaborate on national and European public projects.

The explanation provided to clarify the absence of ideological affiliation and yet placing him in top positions of public affairs approaches the area of the technician-expert, an expertise that complements and supports the political power's decision. However, Monnet does not fall into the category of the pure expert, having not completed studies in any field that would formally qualify him as such. He was neither a lawyer nor an economist, and his conception of the future of France, Europe and the world stems from his own philosophy, developed from the standpoint of a businessman with connections on a global scale.

Although he recommends himself as such, Monnet is therefore not an expert or a technocrat, "but a man whose travels around the world provided him with an exceptional opportunity to observe, to compare"[6]. The substance of these direct life experiences in diverse cultural spaces is exceptional, but Monnet does not have the gift of oratory, not being a speaker who can electrify crowds of listeners, which would have kept him away from a typical political career.[7] As an interesting detail, we still mention the fact that, returning from the USA in November 1945, Monnet flirted for a period with the idea of running in the presidential elections, inclined to participate on behalf of the socialist party, which he greatly admired and shared ideological compatibility with Léon Blum[8].

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4 Jean Pierre Chévènement, *La faute de M. Monnet, La République et l'Europe,* Fayard, 2007.
5 André Kaspi, «Jean Monnet», *Politique étrangère,* no. 1, 1986, pp. 67-73, www.jstor.org.
6 *Ibidem,* p. 67.
7 Eric Roussel, *Jean Monnet. 1888-1979*, Fayard, 1996, p. 114.
8 François Fontaine, cf. Eric Roussel, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

From a sociological point of view, some authors include Monnet in this group of 'high-ranking officials and French politicians who, due to France's central position in European construction, were in one way or another called upon to coordinate the definition of an economic-legal consensus prior to direct political discussions'[9]; once the process of European construction had begun, Monnet briefly held the position of President of the High Authority of the ECSC and witnessed both the setbacks that made a common European defense or European political community impossible, hallmarks of a (feared) explicitly political dimension of the community project. Gradually he exits the main scene of the European process, to which he nevertheless devotes himself through the Action Committee for the United States of Europe[10] which he created in 1955 and in which he invites personalities regardless of their political affiliation. Monnet cultivates those necessary "very active political contacts with the Christian-Democratic and Socialist parties from the six-member countries of the Communities,"[11] continuing to avoid any affiliation: "In 1958 he approved de Gaulle's return. In 1965 he called for a vote for Jean Lecanuet[12] in the presidential election; in the second round, for François Mitterrand[13]. In 1974 he supported Valéry Giscard d'Estaing[14]. The logic of these choices? Aligning with supporters of the European idea. The rest no longer mattered. Monnet liked to remind that he worked in harmony with all political formations and all trade union organizations."[15]

This practical approach – an economic functionalism and a progressive federalism[16] from the perspective of long-term objectives – has obscured, some critics argue, a political vision. The context of the first British application to the communities, in the early 1960s, illustrates the effects of this economy-centered approach, but one lacking a well-defined political goal, and which may, in contrast, become stalled at the level of negotiations where technical issues tend to be predominant and irreconcilable: "Jean Monnet, who is the least Marxist character I have ever met, in the sense that it is impossible for him to conceive the existence of structural divergences that a little imagination and goodwill could not overcome (the Monnet system, based on the idea that the development of economic links creates political understanding, belongs to a fairly Anglo-Saxon non-Marxist materialism), is still surprised, fifteen years later, by the failure of this negotiation. The main problem was that there was no genuine initial consensus regarding the

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9 Marc Joly, *Le mythe de Jean Monnet. Contribution à une sociologie historique de la construction européenne,* CNRS Editions, Paris, 2007, p. 94.

10 This forum brought together politicians and trade union representatives from the six-member states, with the intention of revitalizing the European process after the failure of the European Defence Community and the European Political Community. Its activity ended in 1975. See https://archives.jean-monnet.ch/archives/JM-010.

11 Merry Bromberger, Serge Bromberger, *Les coulisses de l'Europe,* Presses de la Cité, Paris, 1968, p. 136.

12 Founder of the Democratic Centre, Lecaunet ran against de Gaulle for the presidency of France in 1965. See https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/jean-lecanuet/.

13 French left-wing politician, member of the Socialist Party, President of the Republic between 1981-1995.

14 French centre-right politician, member of several political formations in this register, between 1956-2004. President of the Republic between 1974-1981.

15 André Kaspi, *loc. cit.*, p. 73.

16 Michael Burgess, *Federalism and the European Union: Political Idea, Influences and Strategies in the European Communities, 1972-1987,* Psychology Press, 1989, p. 44.

objective to be achieved and the nature of the desired goal."[17] Nevertheless, Monnet had a political vision, but not strictly and classically affiliated with a political option; rather, it was strategically limited to a sectoral economic vision as a starting point; he preferred that this project begin without the United Kingdom, which could have undermined precisely the defining feature of the community, the supranational approach.[18] This choice thus nuances the statement that Monnet's political vision was shadowed by the economic approach of the community project.

Michael Burgess recognizes Monnet's central role in initiating and developing the Community, but questions the benefit brought by this incrementalist strategy to the federalist cause. The functional spillover effect is exhausted in the first years of the community's operation, making political legitimization of the construct necessary, in which the role of the European Parliament is unavoidable.[19]

This turn sheds new light on the political-ideological neutrality and implies a different approach to the European federalist objective. Indeed, Monnet uses phrases such as "federal union" (or confederal, in the later stages of community building) but without theoretically grounding/explaining them or presenting a precise temporal projection of them. Lacking a clear ideological framework, Monnet's community is built on confused, sometimes contradictory principles, and gives rise to a "conceptual enigma" that cannot be inscribed in a categorization process specific to theoretical understanding. Burgess shows that, by contrast, assuming a political-ideological affiliation makes names like Altiero Spinelli or Leo Tindemans true contributors to the development of the idea of European union[20], in contrast to the "stateless international financier,"[21] whose economic-pragmatic approach lacks the vigor of a political idea.

René Massigli, diplomat, ambassador of France to the United Kingdom at the time of the Schuman Declaration, a great supporter of the Franco-British core for Europe and a strong critic of Monnet and the Schuman project (despite some previous convergences of opinion on earlier occasions, at the League of Nations in 1919-1920, or in Algiers in 1943), however nuances Monnet's portrait: "...I had known this remarkable personality well, a curious mix of businessman and ideologist; I knew his method, his gentle stubbornness, his power to persuade; but I had also learned that sometimes one had to resist his charm and that this practical spirit could fall victim to the theory he preferred at that time: I knew...

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17 J. F. Déniau, *Le marché commun*, PUF, 1958, p. 101.

18 This sensitive issue regarding Britain's relationship with the European project is extensively presented by Booker, Christopher, Richard North (2004), *The Great Deception. The True Story of Britain and the European Union*, Antet Publishing House, Bucharest, in a perspective that highlights the reasons why Monnet considered that British participation in the effort related to the Schuman Declaration and then to the negotiation and establishment of the ECSC reduced the chances of success for European unification.

19 John Pinder, "Ghiță Ionescu, 1993-1996: Freedom and Politics", *Governement and Opposition,* tome 31, no. 4, 1996, pp. 400-425, www.cambridge.org, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.1996.tb01198.x., p. 418. Paul Reuter, one of the collaborators of Monnet, and Law professor, explains in his studies that at that time Europe lacked a genuine European people, and that the founders hoped that this people would be coagulate by the functionning itself of the European institutions. See Paul Reuter, `La conception du pouvoir politique dans le Plan Schuman`, in *Revue française de science politique*, 1'année, n°3, 1951, pp. 256-276; doi: https://doi.org/10.3406/rfsp.1951.392081, https://www.persee.fr/doc/rfsp_0035-2950_1951_num_1_3_392081.

20 Michael Burgess *op. cit.,* p. 20.

21 Cf. Eric Roussel, *op. cit*., p. 410.

that, due to his long international career, he had not only rid himself of any nationalist prejudice but also sometimes found it difficult to approach a problem solely from the strict perspective of national interest. Ultimately, this modest man had a dominant personality: technocrat, but also autocrat."[22]

Monnet favored a "method of action", as Frederic F. Fransen states, who says that in the first half of the twentieth century, Europe did not so much need a thinker as it did "means to act."[23] Neither a technician nor a politician, Monnet's benchmark was the practical habit of establishing hierarchies and priorities.[24] Moreover, this detachment of Monnet from a programmatic project is also evident from his statements. Regarding the texts of the community treaties, Monnet said: "As far as I am concerned, I never bothered with speculations about possible improvements to the new community treaties. I believe they contained everything that was possible at that time and at that stage of thinking about the issues."[25]

Monnet's ideological neutrality therefore means pragmatism, valuing political opportunities, an inclination towards the concrete and progressive approaches. This would limit Monnet's vision, as a vision requires a conceptual background and a commitment. Some authors point out that in Monnet, federalist ideas were instrumentalised, as they did not constitute the sole ideological foundation for establishing the community. National governments exploited this lack of a firm ideological basis and retained a pivotal role, and although they accepted the creation of a supranational authority, political authority was not fundamentally transformed.[26] The advantage, according to other viewpoints, would be the absence of "narrow-mindedness, (Monnet) seeking to balance, for pragmatic reasons, federalism and intergovernmentalism."[27].

In other interpretations, in Monnet's case the precise contours of a political-ideological choice would have been intentionally left unclear, in an attempt to reconcile the functionalist-pragmatic approach with the periodic evocation of the federalist ideal. This cannot mask the following conclusion: "Monnet's contribution, as a bureaucrat, to the creation of Europe lacked the high profile and impact of some of the contributions of his contemporary politicians."[28]

This 'institutional realism'[29] of Monnet, if it aimed to go beyond schisms, divergences, political contradictions and to benefit from the circumstances of a context, had as its flip side, on the one hand, the 'closure' of the European project within a small circle of decision-makers, and on the other hand, the neglect of the ideological colour of the community construct: 'That it does not deal with the ideological content of Europe. Will this be a socialist or capitalist community? (Kaspi wonders in the specific context of the 1980s – ed.) For Monnet it is a secondary matter, for Europe will be what Europeans make it. What is essential

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[22] René Massigli, *Une comédie des erreurs,* Paris, 1978, p. 199.

[23] Frederic F. Fransen, *The Supranational Politics of Jean Monnet, Ideas and Origins of the European Community*, Praeger Publishers Inc., 2001, p. 5.

[24] Philippe Lamour, juin 16, 1989, cf. Eric Roussel, *op. cit*., p. 431.

[25] Jean Monnet, *Mémoires*, Fayard, 1976, p. 423.

[26] Michael Burgess, *op. cit*., p. 32.

[27] Martin Holland, "Integrarea europeană și ideile lui Jean Monnet. Federalism versus interguvernamentalism", in *Polis,* no. 3/1995, p. 13.

[28] *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

[29] Marc Joly, *op. cit*., p. 115.

is that it forms, lives, and develops. A common-sense attitude, at least initially. But does it not mean limiting the ambitions of Europe's partisans? By refusing them the fight for an ideology, their motivations are weakened and there is a risk of turning the European construction into an effort by experts more or less accepted by the public, devoid of spirit and life'[30].

After completing his term as President of the High Authority of the ECSC in 1955, Monnet left this European institution; in the same year, he founded the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, considered to be the framework in which the principle of political neutrality was maintained. Monnet managed to bring together leading political figures from Western Europe within the committee, including from the United Kingdom, from all political parties except the Communist and Gaullist ones, including trade unions and employers' associations – thereby gathering them under the broad title of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. This type of network, viewed favourably by the USA, allowed Monnet to resume the European initiative within a "parallel" framework to the actual government, instead relying on lobbying activities carried out by committee members with national parliaments.

One of Monnet's favourite leitmotifs, repeatedly expressed regarding the essence of the community construct in his vision, was embodied by this assembly of Western personalities from all orientations: `We unite people, not states`. The committee functioned from 1955 until 1976, when Monnet, already quite advanced in age, decided to dissolve it, the organization having, he claimed, achieved its objectives. This body, emblematically named for that Monnet philosophy "action committee", was considered by some researchers the culmination of a lifetime of activity, and by others a convenient pretext to mask under a resounding guise the fall into obscurity and removal from the forefront of European actions of the so-called founding father.

However, the community method, also called the Monnet method, has itself become an intrinsic type of ideology; and the European construct is a political stake, a political project – it is no coincidence that the political community provoked debates, divergences, and opposition –, a political platform, where political and ideological neutrality is impossible to achieve, even if the initial colouring of the project was difficult or not explicitly formulated. Monnet himself invoked the ultimate goal of achieving a political union of European states, even if he did not specify its contours and even if he "remained a pragmatist, an advocate of exploiting political opportunities," even if he "placed the principle of step-by-step progress above the purity of federalist principles, considering such an ad hoc approach as the most effective strategy for unifying Europe," and even if he emphasized what was "politically feasible".[31]

We can add to these ideas regarding his political neutrality a supplement that stems from the economic dimension of the community construct: like most of the "founding fathers", Monnet understands the mechanisms of the free market from the perspective of the idea that the necessity of "achieving objectives, whether political, economic, social or of another nature, requires the adoption of

[30] André Kaspi, *loc. cit*., pp. 72-73.
[31] Martin Holland, *loc. cit.,* p. 8.

particular measures, specific and well-thought-out state interventions"[32]. This technical, legal-economic consensus, which precedes direct political discussions, cannot be shaped in the absence of a long-term ideological consensus, even an implicit one. Initially an admirer of the virtues of the free market on the American continent, Monnet later leans towards ideas inspired by the adaptation of the production model from the time of the world wars, when the emphasis is on organization, planning and control. An element of originality, for he will "perceive, even within a liberal economy, the virtues of a certain planning, including outside the war economy." He will apply this approach first within the Planning institution, which he led from 1946 to 1953.[33]

Monnet neither condemns the market economy nor unreservedly supports the principle of nationalizations (nationalizations are justified in sectors such as electricity, banks or mining operations, without extending the list too much to other sectors); he speaks out against excessive regulations, whose burden discourages entrepreneurs and hinders economic revival; he is not in favor of bureaucratization, although the projects he was involved in required the development of a bureaucratic apparatus for their practical implementation. For Monnet, bureaucracy means a difficult-to-control factor, administrative inertia and arbitrariness in the application of regulations, an arbitrariness that sometimes arises from dysfunctional relationships between officials.[34]

It can be said that Monnet had a pragmatic, a-theoretical conception, placed between the free market and dirigisme, with a tendency nonetheless more pronounced towards the latter, fashionable at the time under the influence of the renowned economist John Maynard Keynes. However, some authors point out that if Monnet's trust in the so-called indicative planning had worked, then "economic coordination would have escaped from national hands."[35] Instead, this author shows, the ECSC became an agent of the free market due to the attitude of the industrial sector in Germany and the Benelux countries.[36] A deliberate compromise, some authors argue, consistent with the belief that supranationalism can only result from the progressive evolution of integration, but also with the presumption that dirigisme and the free market would not exclude each other in the strictest manner.[37]

Monnet's approach is first and foremost marked by a pronounced economic focus, which tends to ignore or sideline the political aspect, according to Jean Pierre Chévènement, an economic focus already evident in the letter from August 1943, from Algiers. The emphasis in August 1943 was on the establishment of the European heavy metallurgy state, a solution to avoid another European and global war. The format of this idea would later inspire the first European Community of

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[32] Isabelle Petit, *Les pères fondateurs et les peuples de l'Union Européenne: boulverser les idées reçues,* Gérard Boismenu, Isabelle Petit, *L'Europe qui se fait. Regards croisés sur un parcours inachevé,* Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Les Presses Universitaires de Montreal, Paris, Open Editions Books, 2008, DOI: 10.4000/books.editionsmsh.991, pp. 59-60.

[33] Jean Pierre Chévènement, *op. cit.,* p. 15.

[34] Jean Monnet, *op. cit*.

[35] S. George, *Politics and Policy in the European Community*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1985, p. 5.

[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] Martin Holland, *loc. cit.,* p. 12.

Coal and Steel. A simplistic conception, Chévènement states, derived from Monnet's concern to have the principle of limiting national sovereignty accepted, a conception that makes Monnet less receptive to a range of ideological implications that arise from key concepts associated with the idea of the state or from rivalries during the Cold War. On the contrary, other authors argue that it is an exaggeration to consider that Monnet was a proponent of reductive economic functionalism, given that the political objective he had in mind was a European federalism.[38]

In de Gaulle's critical view, Monnet's integrated Europe lacked its own policy and was instead to be dependent on an external unifier who would, as far as he was concerned, have a policy regarding the old continent. In other words, a Europe without political colour would be nothing but a trap of dependence on an external power, namely the United States.[39] On the one hand, therefore, the primacy of politics; on the other hand, the primacy of a method of merging national sovereignties under the 'sovereignty' of a supranational commission.

Paul Leroy Beaulieu perfectly summarizes this contradictory pair: `What struck one about Monnet was first and foremost his internationalism. For him, de Gaulle was an anachronistic provincial, whereas on the other hand the general considered Monnet not truly French. The difference, I believe, largely came from the fact that (Monnet) had seen a different horizon very early on; his historical culture was limited and therefore he harboured no kind of hatred.[40] In other words, Monnet, too open to international horizons, too cosmopolitan and too little attached to a grand and unique history of France, has no particular political or ideological inclination. However, this perception of Monnet does not exclude views at the opposite end, in the light of which the distance between de Gaulle and Monnet becomes debatable. Thus, Pietro Quaroni, the Italian negotiator during the drafting of the general EEC treaty, stated: "With the Schuman Plan, France tried, to some extent, to take the lead in European integration policy."[41]

These brief considerations on Monnet's political neutrality therefore sketch out some nuances. Monnet's apoliticism is commonly asserted – as a virtue or as a limitation – supported by the actual fact of never having been affiliated with or a member of a political party and of never having embraced a particular ideology. As we can extract from a study in a completely different field, apoliticism involves "establishing a code of neutral conduct, requires a certain work on oneself, a form of fencing off areas of interest, as some promoters and practitioners have real political commitments"[42]. Indeed, Monnet seems to fit this profile; he created his own method of action, which can be seen to recur in his endeavors, and in which distancing oneself from the stakes and commitments of political play was a constant. He created "a new specialized field, equipped with its own stakes and its own rules of the game".[43]

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[38] Gilles Grin, «Jean Monnet, le Comité d'Action pour les Etats Unis d'Europe et la genèse des Traités de Rome», Relations Internationales, no. 4, pp. 21-32, www.cairn.info, Doi: 10.3917/ri.136.0021.

[39] Jean Pierre Chévènement, *op. cit*., p. 33.

[40] Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, to Eric Roussel, *op. cit*., p. 449.

[41] Note from june 9, 1950, Ministerio degli Affari Esterni, Roma, Archivio Diplomatico, DGAE VFFF III, Piano Schuman.

[42] Jacques Defrance, "La politique de l`apolitisme. Sur l`autonomisation du champ sportif", in *Politix*, vol. 14, mo. 50/2000, pp. 13-27, doi: 10.3406/polix.2000.1084, p. 17.

[43] *Ibidem.*

Monnet's actions belong to the political field, and their stakes are eminently political. Some authors appreciate that this form of apoliticism would constitute the specific mark of Monnet's influence. He respected a formal manner of apoliticism, but essentially his decisions were loaded with political significance and consequences; his participation in the political field was active and long-lasting, even if he did not fit the classic pattern of a politician. Thus, one of his main collaborators, the economist Pierre Uri, places Monnet in the political category, but the reason for ideological neutrality remains, taking the form of equidistance: "No one is less technocratic than this commissioner of the plan and president of the coal-steel community... He ignores techniques and gets a little lost in numbers. His domain is creation and movement... Who would have been capable of bringing together and seating at the same table socialists and Christian democrats, liberal parties and labour unions? Monnet is a politician."[44]

To further nuance the reason for Monnet's particular relationship with his political neutrality, we will also point out the fact that, in critical moments, he considers it necessary to make decisions at the highest political level, above the level of technical details, expertise, etc. The example of the Franco-British union project of June 1940 illustrates this valuing of the political field, where visions regarding social realities/events are in fact articulated. In this ambitious and desperate endeavor at the same time, technical details became irrelevant in the face of the objective: "Paradoxically, as the most logical decisions, the simplest coordination, slipped out of our control, we set our objectives even higher and tried to regain political control over events that were eluding us militarily. When hoping for the combination of general staffs became useless, the perspective of a merger of sovereignties opened up."[45] The connection between expertise, which in principle does not imply a political commitment, and vision also emerges from the arguments presented by Monnet in a report on talks with Konrad Adenauer, which took place following the public launch of the Schuman Declaration: 'As a technician, I know that these problems are never unsolvable if approached from the perspective of a big idea.'[46]

We can stand as a conclusion that Monnet opted for an a-political personal engagement, but this did not exclude the objective of a political long-term vision. The European project has a versatility that "resides in the broad scope of Monnet's conception: not crowded by the specifications of precise institutional relationships, or without clearly describing even its destination, the idea of European integration can be flexible enough to appeal to a wide political spectrum, from cautious intergovernmentalists to unrestrained federalists." This "broad scope" reflected the concrete circumstance of founding the first community within the strict framework of deep integration of a limited sector; this seemingly politically neutral sectoral approach generated economic, financial, technical, legal, and social challenges that made the expansion of the project inevitable and highlighted the

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[44] Pierre Uri, "Rue de Martignac", în *Témoignages à la mémoire de Jean Monnet*, Fondation Jean Monnet pour l`Europe, Lausanne, 1989.

[45] Jean Monnet, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[46] *Idem*, cf. *La naissance d`un continent nouveau,* Fondation Jean Monnet pour l`Europe, Centre de Recherches Européennes, 1990, pp. 197 *sqq.*

difficulty of articulating and especially to put into practice an unified and forward-looking political vision of the member states, and not just one subordinate to the economic vector. Monnet had his own political vision under the claim of his personal apolitical option. The real challenge is to translate this type of approach, or to find another and more actual one, at the member states level, for which it continues to be very difficult to come to a harmonious political vision.

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