ALAIN TOURAINE
BIOGRAPHY
Born on 3 August 1925, in Hermanville-sur-Mer, Alain Touraine joined the École Normale Supérieure as a student in 1945, from which he qualified as agrégé in History in 1950. Afterwards, he was appointed, in turn, Researcher Assistant and then Researcher at the CNRS (Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique), a position he occupied until 1958. Between 1952 and 1953, he was Rockefeller Fellow at Harvard, Columbia and Chicago universities.

In 1956, he created the Sociology of Work Research Centre at the University of Chile. In 1965, Alain Touraine earned a doctorate of letters and, in 1960 was appointed as Director of Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, later renamed the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. From 1966 to 1969 he lectured at the Faculty of Arts at the Université Paris-Nanterre. In 1958, he founded the Laboratoire de Sociologie Industrielle and, in 1970, the Centre d’Études des Mouvements Sociaux. Finally, in 1981 he founded the Centre d’Analyse et d’Intervention Sociologiques, which he directed from 1981 to 1993, when he handed over the reigns to Michel Wieviorka.

Member of a number of sociology associations, Alain Touraine was President of the French Sociology Society from 1968 to 1970, and Vice-President of the International Sociological Association from 1974 to 1978. He has also been a member of the Haut Conseil à l’Intégration (1994-96) and is member of the Governing Council of the Maison d’Amérique Latine. He is also a foreign member of numerous academies, including the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Europe, the Mexican Academy of Sciences and the Brazilian Academy of Letters.

His career can be divided into three stages:

1) Firstly, that given over to the sociology of work and, in particular, the sociology of worker consciousness. To this period belong his first works carried out in Latin America, on
the Chilean mineworkers and foundry workers, as well as his book on the post-industrial society, *La société post-industrielle* [‘The Post-Industrial Society’].

This period was given over to defining and focusing his sociology, as explained in his book *Sociologie de l’action* [‘The Sociology of Action’] (1965), and, eight years later, in *Production de la société* [‘The Self-Production of Society’].

2) The events of May ‘68 and the military coups in Latin America led Alain Touraine to focus upon the study of social movements. With a group of friends, he developed a sociological intervention method and carried out a series of studies, from *La voix et le regard* [‘The Voice and the Eye’] to *Le Mouvement ouvrier* [‘The Workers’ Movement’], in 1984. Over the course of this second period, he turned his attention to studying Latin America and the problems of development in general. In 1981, he went to live in Poland to study Solidarity and, in Latin America, he wrote a book, initially published in Chile and later reviewed, rewritten and published in France under the title *La parole et le sang. Politique et société en Amérique Latine* [‘Blood and the Word. Politics and Society in Latin America’].

3) The third stage began with titles such as *Le retour de l’acteur* [‘The Return of the Actor’] and, above all, *Critique de la modernité* [‘Critique of Modernity’], *Qu’est-ce que la démocratie?* [‘What is Democracy?’], *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble? Égaux et différents* [‘Can we live together? Equality and difference’] and *Comment sortir du libéralisme?* [‘Beyond Neo-Liberalism’], which cover the subjects of concern to him. The dominant idea is that of the Subject, considered as the central principle of action of social movements (cf. *Penser le Sujet. Autour d’Alain Touraine*, [‘Thinking of the Subject. About Alain Touraine’], F. Dubet and M. Wieviorka, ed. (Fayard, 1995)). His latest book, *La recherche de soi. Dialogue sur le Sujet* [‘The Search for Self. Dialogues with the Subject’], with Farhad Khosrokhavar, focuses on the choice of the Subject, as is the case with his most recent books.
Thus it is that the entire corpus of his work constitutes a sociology of action, studied on a practical level during the first stage, with a broader historical focus during the second and more philosophically in the third.

Throughout his life, he has attempted to link together different types of studies: theoretical and analytical studies, sociological empirical research per se, analysis of real historical events and, finally, books of a more controversial or intimate type. He has always considered it vital to remain as best informed as possible about different kinds of societies. It is for this reason that he wrote a book on North American universities and their student movement, has followed with keen interest developments in French-speaking Canada, has carried out a vast study on post-communist countries and has dedicated a large part of his life to the study of the countries of South America.

He has placed increasing emphasis on the general cultural shift that has led from a Descartes-style outlook, oriented towards a conquest of the world by means of knowledge, law, economy and arms, to a new culture oriented towards the construction of the subject—in other words, each individual’s will to act, understood as the purpose of their very existence. And Alain Touraine constantly highlights the leading role of women in this change.

**Honorary Doctor of the following universities**


**Professional positions**

President of the French Sociology Society (1968-70)
Vice-President of the International Sociological Society (1974-78)
Member of the Governing Council of the Maison de l’Amérique Latine
Academies

Member, Academy of Europe (1990-99)
Foreign member, Polish Academy of Sciences (1991)
Foreign honorary member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1994)
Correspondent member, Mexican Academy of Sciences (1998)
Correspondent member, Brazilian Academy of Letters (1998)
Member, National Academy of History, Argentina (1998)
Member, Chilean Academy of Political Sciences (1998)
Foreign member, Academy of Sciences of Turin, Moral, Historical and Philological Sciences Division (2003)

Publications

Books


1974 - Pour la sociologie ['For sociology'], Paris: Seuil, 249 pages [translated into Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, Greek].

1974 - Lettre à une étudiante ['Letter to a student'], Paris: Seuil, 254 pages and also in Points politiques, 1976 [translated into Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, German].

1976 - Les sociétés dependants ['Dependent societies'], Paris-Gembloux: J. Duculot, 266 pages [translated into Spanish, Italian].


1984 - *Le Mouvment ouvrier*, with M. Wieviorka and F. Dubet, Paris: Fayard, 438 pages [translated into Italian, English (as *The


Portuguese (Terramar, 1996), Greek (Viktor Papazissis, 1996 ?),
German (a part of the book) (Blätter, 1996)].

1996 - Le grand refus - Réflexions sur la grève de décembre 1995
[‘The great rejection: reflections on the strike of December 1995’],
with François Dubet, Farhad Khosrokhavar, Didier Lapeyronnie
and Michel Wieviorka, Paris: Fayard, 320 pages.

1997 - Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble ? Égaux et différents. Paris:
Fayard, 398 pages [translated into Spanish (SM, 1998), Italian (Il
Saggiatore, 1998), English (as Can we Live Together? Equality
and Difference, Polity Press, 1999), Chinese (The Commercial
Press, 2003), Brazilian Portuguese, Arabic, Portuguese (Instituto
Piaget, 1999), Brazilian Portuguese (Vozes, 1998, 2003), Turkish
(Yapi Kredi, 1998, 2002), Spanish for Latin America (Fondo de
Cultura Económica, 1997, 2000), Chinese for Taiwan (currently
being published), Swedish (Daidalos, 2003)], new edition in Livre
de Poche, Biblio/Essais collection, February 1999.

1997 - Eguaglianza e diversità ['Equality and Diversity’] (mini-
book), Rome: Ed. Laterza, 87 pages [translated into
Portuguese].

Book, 78 pages (EDO 109).

(fairly long extracted in Partage, 130, February 1999) [translated
into Italian (Il Saggiatore, 1999), Greek (Polis, 1999), Portuguese
(Terramar, 2000), Brazilian Portuguese (EDUSC, 2000), English
(as Beyond Neoliberalism, Polity Press, 2001), Spanish (Paidós,
1999 and 2003), Korean (Dang Dae, 1999)], new edition in Livre

2000 – La recherche de soi. Dialogue sur le Sujet ['The Search
for Self. Dialogues with the Subject’], with Farhad Khosrokhavar,
Paris: Fayard, 319 pages [translated into Portuguese (Instituto
Piaget, 2001), Brazilian Portuguese (Ed. Bertrand Brasil, 2001,
2004), Spanish (Ed. Paidós, 2002), Italian (Il Saggiatore, 2003)],
2001 – *La diagonale du sujet (portrait d’Alain Touraine)* [‘The diagonal of the subject (portrait of Alain Touraine)’], film available in VHS format, by Jean-Louis Cros for the Université Paris VII-Denis Diderot.


2005 – *Un nouveau paradigme pour comprendre le monde d’aujourd’hui* [‘A new paradigm for understanding the world of today’], Paris: Fayard, 365 pages [translated into Spanish (Paidós, 2005)].
