CLOSING ADDRESS BY
THE RECTOR OF THE UOC
We are what we defend

The first time I heard of Professor Touraine, almost 35 years ago now, I was an adolescent committed to ideals that I had not even begun to understand but which I repeated from memory and which I was ready to defend against anything and anyone. Be that as it may, you should understand that, in 1972, in the midst of our dreams of transforming a dictatorship into a lendemain qui chante, hearing of the post-industrial society came as a rude shock. The proletariat had yet to take power, and we were there to help them. We needed factories and we needed workers, and we could not just betray our ideals. Even Elio Petri, the great director and social analyst, had just released The working class goes to heaven, his film on trades union and the class struggle, that won the Palme d’Or at Cannes in 1972.

No, the truth was that to think of a post-industrial society was revisionist. In this context, someone very close to me, but older, who had followed the events of May ’68, read Touraine’s book with great enthusiasm and wanted me to read it too. I couldn’t. I stopped at page 21, soon after starting the section The prehistory of a new society, where it states that social struggles are about to transform themselves into cultural revolutions and, therefore, that social conflicts place themselves more in the field of consumption than that of production. This was the preamble to what he would later dub the post-social society, in which all the categories that organise our representation and our action are no longer solely social but also cultural.

Where did this leave the class struggle that was, according to Marx, the driving force behind historical development? What did it mean to say that this new society, which he also called the programmed society, would depend much more on knowledge and, therefore, on its ability to be creative and that it would be a society that would shortly turn the workers into a category without importance?

At that time, I could not see beyond industrial development and was incapable of imagining a society in which the majority of workers were not involved in the production of tangible goods.
Additionally, these prejudices (or fears) of ideological uncertainty prevented me from understanding the central importance attached by Professor Touraine to the workers’ movement and to economic history.

Shortly after the fall of President Allende on 11 September 1973, and a little more open to new visions of reality, I asked him for an appointment, and he saw me at his office at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme on the Boulevard Raspail in Paris. He had recently arrived from Chile and did not realise that, although I had dared to begin my sociology studies in France, I spoke not a word of French. He did not realise this because he immediately began speaking with me in fantastic Spanish. I, of course, mentioned nothing to him of this, but he must have guessed something to the effect, because he directed me to a colleague of his, Professor Alain Joxe, who had also recently returned from Chile and with whom I completed my maîtrise.

In other words, right after crossing the border, I moved from the influence of Lenin’s *Leftwing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* to that of the Cohn Bendits’ *Leftism: Remedy for the Senile Disorder of Communism*.

In Paris, one of the things that most appealed to me about Touraine’s work was his approximation to what he called the *sociology of action* and also *actionalism*. This is based on the belief that societies build their future by means of structural mechanisms, but also thanks to social and, therefore, culture struggles. At the end of the day, as Galeano says, we are what we do to change what we are. Or as Hegel puts it less poetically: “A will that decides nothing is not a will: that which does not decide, be it an individual or society, is dead.”

Touraine suggests the term *demodernisation*, which he contrasts with postmodernism, to define the end of the rationalist model of the Illustration, that is, the dissociation of the universe of rationality (production, technique and market) from that of freedom (spirit, culture and identity).

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Thus it is that “freedom and difference are not incompatible but directly interdependent” or, put another way, we cannot renounce our differences if we wish to be equal.

Having broken down the social frameworks, Touraine gradually becomes interested in the individual: “It may be that the idea of society has not disappeared. However, in any case, it exists in the worst way possible.”

He defines the subject as the desire to become an individual, to create a history and a personal project, of giving experience a meaning: the subject as the creator of society, as the builder of this society. For Touraine, there are no fixed rules or values that have governed society “forever” but, instead, it is the subject that creates them at any given time.

As part of the process that takes us from being to becoming, there is an urgent need for us to build, together, a project and to express what we want to be and where we want to go.

Touraine is critical of identity movements insofar as they might annul “the other”: “Pourrons nous vivre ensemble?”, he writes, and acknowledges multiplicity even though he asks himself whether it can be managed.

Touraine began his professional life asking himself the question “Based on what conditions is class consciousness formed in the workers’ world?” I began mine with a similar question, with a small addition: “Based on what conditions is national and class consciousness formed in the workers’ world? Even though it might not seem so, the different is significant, but what matters here is that both questions were clearly formulated with the industrial society as the point of reference. Today he writes (a view to which I subscribe): “The important question is how an individual or group can manage to create, maintain and transform their singularity whilst, at the same time, retaining universal values.”

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2 A. Touraine (1997), Igualdad y diversidad, las nuevas tareas de la democracia ['Equality and diversity, democracy’s new tasks'], México, Fondo de Cultura Económica.
3 A. Touraine (2005), Un nuevo paradigma para comprender el mundo de hoy ['A new paradigm for understanding today’s world'], Barcelona, Paidós.
Thus it is that he talks of Europe as a state without a nation, he worries about the lack of a European consciousness and the attempt to build a Europe without Europeans\textsuperscript{6}.

“For a long time now I have been aware of having moved from one kind of society to another, passing through a time of collective and, in part, personal confusion [...] One has to understand oneself well before attempting to understand the world.”\textsuperscript{7}

With regard to social movements, it can be said that Touraine progresses to what he calls new social movements, which are those which contribute to shaping the subjectivity of each of us. “The new social movements do not have as their goal the transformation of situations and economic relations but rather defend each individual’s freedom and responsibility, alone or collectively, against the impersonal logic of profit and competition and also against an established order that decides what is normal and abnormal, what is permitted and prohibited.”\textsuperscript{8}

As a woman, I cannot fail to mention his fascinating book Le monde des femmes, published by Fayard, and would like to say to him, now that I have the opportunity to do so publicly, that I fully share his vision, which contradicts some of the opinions arising at the start of the feminist movement, and I thank him for being able to see how we women, like peoples, do not have to define ourselves as victims, but have to do so positively, knowing how to formulate our project, which does not necessarily have to be against anything but can instead be complementary to everything. There are many things that run in parallel when defining women and peoples in the sociology of dependencies and which it would be interesting to analyse on another occasion.

The post-industrial society, subject, identity and development, which involves the economy but also the building of society, the building of the nation and the building of democracy; these are all matters of concern to us as members of the university world and of the UOC community.

\textsuperscript{6} A. Touraine (2005).
\textsuperscript{7} A. Touraine (2002).
\textsuperscript{8} A. Touraine (2005).
Before I finish, I would like to recall some words that he penned during the aftermath of May ‘68 on the role of the university, words that should make us think: “The university is the last great organisation that can, as such, be a force to counter political and economic apparatuses.”

Touraine has always been interested in the university as a key institution in society and also as a form of global, integrating cultural communication. I have no doubt at all the he will feel at home as a member of the UOC, a university that is also a great means of communication, deeply rooted in the territory yet present in a world, that of the Internet, where languages mark the frontiers and in which the management of languages and cultures is essential for survival.

9 A. Touraine (1969), La sociedad postindustrial (The post-industrial society), Barcelona, Ariel.
GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenes dum sumus,
post iucundam iuventutem,
post molestam senectutem,
nos habebit humus (bis).

Ubi sunt qui ante nos
In mundo fuere?
Adeas ad inferos,
Transeas ad superos,
His si vis videre (bis).

Vivat academia,
vivant professores!
Vivat membrum quodlibet,
vivant membra quaelibet,
semper sint in flore (bis).

Voices: Quartet from Dyapason Chamber Choir
Piano: Carmen Paz