A new look on nature and society

A tribute to Serge Moscovici

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It was on November, 15, 2014 when Serge Moscovici has definitively left us. Since then many friends, colleagues and followers have remembered his name. The present text must also be seen as one more tribute to the scientist he was not only in the field of social psychology to which his contribution is only too well known. Being a historian and a philosopher, Serge Moscovici significantly contributed to development of scientific ideas, however, he had many other facets that would be briefly recalled in this chapter.

More specifically I will examine his contribution to the ecological issues, which are at the center of our concerns now, sufficing it to recall the last conference held in Paris in 2015 whose results do not seem to meet the challenges faced by our planet. Serge Moscovici (SM from now on) very much reflected these problems both as a social scientist and as a philosopher and also as an activist as a militant, becoming a leading figure of what one could name the French approach to political ecology, more focused on how the representations of nature and humanity are mutually linked.

I am sure that this is quite familiar and well known. Anyway, although running the risk of being unjust, I also believe that this other side of the SM's work has not received the attention that it deserves, at least within the community centred on the fields of social representations as well as minority influence. This does not mean, however, that the environment topic has not been addressed often, particularly as an object of empirical studies. On the contrary, it is sufficient to recall the relevant studies conducted by Denise Jodelet, Angela Arruda, Paula Castro, Marie-Claude Gervais, Arjen Buiga, and certainly many others, where the conceptual frame is nevertheless restricted to the ways in which some specific environmental issues are socially represented by common sense.

What is surprising, at least to me, is that even those studies, which are certainly important for a better understanding of the ecological issues of our societies, seldom refer to the works where SM more deeply reflected on the concept of Nature and the concept of Society as it is the case of his three well known titles – *The Human History of Nature*, *The Society Against Nature*, *Domestic Men, Savage Men.* And let alone a number of articles and interviews not only with the purpose of extending and clarifying his ideas and proposals, but also as an outcome of his role as one of the founding fathers of the ecological movement in France in the 1970's. I would venture to claim that this other facet is neither less relevant nor less seminal than his work on *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public.*

This other path of SM's work is very well documented in the book "About Nature – Thinking Ecology" (*De la Nature. Pour penser l'écologie*) edited in 2002 by Pascal Dibie, bringing together selected texts, conferences and interviews published and presented during the period from 1972 to 1999, some of which reviewed or even completely reformulated by SM. The texts herein collected are, as a matter of fact, very much enlightening and they contribute not only to convey a more clear view of theoretical ideas developed by SM, but also to show how they are articulated with his political and ideological option. SM as a scientist and an academic has always put forward the discipline of social psychology that he has contributed so much to building.

This seems to cast a shadow on the philosopher he claimed not to be, but that eventually he was have been. When I chose the transdisciplinary style of his thinking as the title, it was, in a certain way, to highlight his capacity to establish a dialogue between a variety of knowledge s (savoirs) and, above all, to suggest that the "new look" that he introduced to social psychology would eventually consist in inserting this interdiscipline into a heterarchy rather than into the traditional hierarchy – I quote his own terms – in the field of science and knowledge.

Such a transdiciplinarity becomes even more evident in the field of the recent salience acquired by ecology, a discipline with ill-defined boundaries and multiple internal controversities, reinforcing the perception of the environmental risks which threaten our collective survival. As claimed by Ulrich Bek our society became a *risk society.*

The aim is not to juxtapose disciplines, putting them side by side, but rather to survey the impact caused by the putative objective but often contradictory results on communities at both local and global levels.

We are not far from the Moscovici's pioneering study on the way how the discourses about psychoanalysis were constructed by the French citizens during the fifties. Focusing however on Nature – "comme feuillet de l'Être" (as foliage of Being) as suggested by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1994, p. 266) – one is invited to a double decentration-upstream, where nature is theoretically thought as a "pre-objective temporality", and down-stream "in media res", where nature becomes a cause espoused by the observer turning him into an active participant of a political movement. What appears to be fascinating, at least to me, in this "case study", is the coherence that can be observed in the way how the praxis expresses its underlying conceptual framework, how are they are so intertwined in a sort of epistemic complicity. The article has two parts.

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In the first one I will address the theoretical contributions to what he called "the question of nature" (*La question naturelle*) followed by the second part where the focus turns to the role of SM as a militant of ecologism.

1 Triangle Nature-Science-Culture (*Society*)

The analysis of the SM's philosophical thought,which remains to be done, has to be started by the three work previously mentioned – *Essay About the Human History of Nature*, published in 1968, *The Society Against Nature* published in 1972 and *Domestic Men, Savage Men* published in 1974.

Let me be clear: in what follows, the intention is only to scratch the surface of the many layers offered by this rich coherent sequence. Consider this as a start, only a beginning.

The first in the series – *The Human History of Nature* – was initiated in 1962 in Princeton where , as Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies, met and exchanged with renowned scientific figures such as J. Robert Oppenheimer. The book was concluded and published six years later in Paris. At that time SM had already published the seminal "La Psychanalyse, son image et son public", his doctoral dissertation where, as it is well known, he introduced the notion and the theory of social representations.

It is worth recalling that in parallel to with his training in psychology attended the lectures of Alexander Koyré on the field of history and philosophy of science, a scientific domain that he has always cultivated and to which he has made significant contributions. It was besides Koyré who sponsored his fellowship in Princeton.

The three works mentioned above are not the only reflections he has dedicated to the philosophy of science. Many other shorter, but no less relevant texts have been bequeathed to us by him. It should also be noted that his multi, inter and transdisciplinary style hascontributed greatly to his vast culture as documented by the array of classics or more recent authors that he quotes making him a typical polymath of the Renaissance a period of History that he so revered. The three main works on the "Question of Nature" – the title given to the introduction of "The Human History of Nature", could be seen as a reflexion in three successive waves, although each one of them is autonomous, with its own argumentative autonomy.

It is not an easy task to attempt a critical reading of this triptych. The argumentation from 1961 to 1974 evolved from a more theoretical complexity to a more rhetorical radicalism, perhaps reflecting the author's insertion into the public militancy. It is, however, possible to trace some central ideas consistently sustained by SM which explain why he claimed in a conversation with Paul Ribes in 1978 that ecology was is "an epistemological movement" inherited from a tradition-the structuralism which, and I quote him, from Diogenes to Wittgenstein, through Rousseau, Goethe or Marx, haunts us and should, like any tradition, be reinvented (Moscovici, 1978).

For SM "la question naturelle" is a concept systematically presented throughout his work, seems to express the idea of a triadic relation where science would exert a

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mediating role between human society and nature (figure 1), but a nature where humans themselves are included and intermingled both as cause and effect.

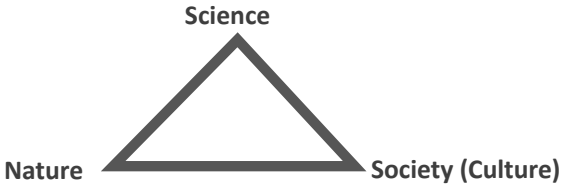


Figure 1: The triadic relation beteween Nature, Science and Society

The emphasis is given here to the idea of not opposing society (or culture) to nature, of not considering the human species in terms of exceptionalism. SM always adds culture in parenthesis whenever he writes society, which is likely to mean that it is the broad cultural features of society that he intends target. Anyway such a move raises problems would require another article (see Castro, 1996).

The paradigm to which SM has decisively contributed to introduce is opposed to the dominant Western paradigm, which is still largely espoused today, according to which the human species are qualitatively different from the other ones and thus entitled to dominate and to exploit the resources of nature. The human exceptionalism, which a more sophisticated terminology has recently replaced by with "exemptionalism" (Dunlop & Catton, 1994), in the sense that humans would be exempted from all environmental responsibilities, is given by science and technology- a human invention- which ultimately would permit a more intelligent and less predatory uses of nature. The central intuition of SM was presumably to consider the passage from "evolution" to "history" not as an "epistemological break" in the sense of Gaston Bachelard. From one to the other, there are both continuities and discontinuities. The "history" has started before and the "evolution", understood in terms of natural species, continues after the emergence of hominids.

The exponential development of science in the twentieth century, the atomic bomb showing that humanity had now the means to destroy itself, were factors contributing to alert people about the need to rethink the model of societies in which people wish to live and the desirable role science should play. The centrality of science in modern times is also, as it might be recalled, one central topic that SM examined in his thesis on the social representations of psychoanalysis. The growing presence of science in our daily lives has great influence upon the way in which nature and culture are represented by common sense.

The *Histoire humaine de la nature* is constructed in accordance with this conceptual triad. In the first part the concept of *Nature* is examined mainly from the side of the successive transformations of the role of the work in human production; the second part deals with the development of sciences and techniques and their links with human practices of nature production ; the third part examines to what extent societies have

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created a culture opposed to nature, where nature is reduced to a source of resources to e be exploited and dominated; the book concludes by arguing for the need for a new govern e ment of nature which in turn demands a new model for science.

In 1972, two years later, Moscovici published *La société contre nature* where he deepened his denounce of the predatory activity to which men have subjected nature. He enriches the argument by introducing a second dimension, that old human nature,which gives rise to new asymmetries, those between civilized people *versus* savages, as well as between men and women. The arguments presented here, reinforced in the postface of 1994, are particularly original, anticipating what will later be designated by *ecofeminism*. The feminism developed here, however, presents some surprising characteristics, as shown by the way SM analyses Antigone's paradigmatic figure, from the classic Sophocles' eponymous tragedy, a masterpiece that inspired and continues to inspire numerous interpretations as documented in a comprehensive review offered by Steiner (1984).

Let me briefly recall the plot. In the tragedy there are two feminine characters – Antigone and her sister Ismene, both daughters of Oedipus and Jocaste. Antigone is a rebel figure, that dares to challenge Creon, their uncle and now king of Thebes, the city where the action takes place. Creon forbids to bury the corpse of Polyneices, their brother, killed in a battle against the tyrant. Ismene is a perfect contrast with Antigone. She told her sister "We are born to be women, not to fight men". Antigone disobeys and now faces the punishment prescribed by law. The figure of Antigone assumes an emblematic value that embodies the defence of the natural as well as immemorial law, given by God, infinitely stronger than the laws of men as expressed in local and arbitrary decrees. This is the most frequent interpretation given to the figure of Antigone. The Sophocles' heroin is also very frequently recalled for the replica she gives to Creonte "I was born to love not to hate" a sentence that sounds much closer to Ismene's sweet "feminine" voice and apparently less coherent with the wild Antigone, the face that Moscovici eventually puts on the foreground of his reading.

As a matter of fact, and as far as I could find, the Moscovici's interpretation is very much idiosyncratic. He starts by not isolating the play from the larger tragedy of Oedipus who killed his father and married his mother Jocaste. Antigone, Ismene and Polyneices are the fruits of this incestuous liaison. For Moscovici it is still this very same taboo that Antigone intends to break in insisting to bury the corpse of Polyneices, challenging in this way the law of the city. It is important to stress, however, that such an act of burial could be interpreted as a symbolic union with her brother.

But SM goes even further in refusing the universality of the incest tabooas a symptom of the transition from a "filiative" to an"affiliative" society, the former is based on the blood kinship and the latter – on emotional ties, but rather as a blurring of its borders or, in other words, as breaking the distinction between nature and culture. The exemplarity of Antigone would then consist in the contrast with her sister Ismene, making Antigone not only the symbol of alternative justice, which she actually is, but also and maybe still more important, the expression of a libertarian attitude beyond

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the good and the evil.Such an attitude appears even more challenging in the face the "vox populi" background of the Chorus, which, at the beginning of the tragedy, celebrates the prodigy of the Man who fights and submits nature.

> « O clear intelligence, force beyond all measure !
> O fate of man, working both good and evil !
> When the laws are kept, how proudly his city stands !
> When the laws are broken, what of his city then ?
> Never may the anarchic man find rest at my hearth,
> Never be it said that my thoughts are his thoughts. »
>
> Sophocles – Antigone (translation Kitto, 1962).

The Chorus in their final lines could not but condemn Antigone for her double disobedience both to the law and to men. Once again the idea that nature, in this case sexually splitted, would be in itself a construction in progress. Such a move, which, to some extent, if I have read him correctly, appears to be a celebration of the rebelliousness, is pursued in the third book *Hommes domestiques et hommes sauvages*. Domestic or better said *domesticated* means the capacity of the humans to control and to fight the nature that inhabits inside our own selves, which turns out in drawing a boundary between the human and the non-human, between culture and nature. As SM claims, we have to *ensauvager* the world- a neologism he had introduced and which could be translated into English as *wildering* for expressing the appeal towards a *re-enchantment* of the world, another topic very present in his work. Throughout this book pervades a style, an atmosphere reminding Friedrich Nietzsche expressed by what the author names as *art of rebellion* the rebellion of nature practised since the Greek Antiquity until our days.

Contrary to the notorious "there is no alternative" of some political voices, SM always reiterates that there is never a single possibility, a single line of action, that would not trigger another different or even opposite solution. On the horizon, one can already see the role of "active minorities", the theory that SM introduced with the well-known success (Moscovici, 1976) which could also explain the salience acquired by the ecological movement. In fact, *la question naturelle* has became, as stressed by SM, the issue of our time, which remains no less central on the agenda of our growing global world where culture, science and nature are so problematically linked. The last chapter of the *Hommes domestiques* entitled "On the Kepler's revolution" Moscovici elaborates an interpretation that will be quoted by Prigogine & Stengers in their highly acclaimed *The New Alliance* (1986) a book that has opened new avenues in the philosophy of science. He therein compares the wide acceptance of the "Copernican revolution" with other revolutions that have only displaced the locus of the observer (subject) who, although moving to a more distant point, does not alter his solipsistic status. Let me quote his own words: "*Enfin la révolution décentre, laisse entrevoir des relations, substitue à une vision axée sul la disjonction (des centres et des périphéries, de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur) une vision axée sur leur conjonction. Puisque connaître c'est transformer et se transformer, puisque c'est interagir au lieu de détacher, alors toute loi, toute théorie, toute méthode ne concerne plus un terme*

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unique, exclusif : l'objet, le naturel, le primitif, le soleil, mais une relation : la relation de l'observateur et de l'objet observé, de la société et de la nature, de l'homme et de l'animal, du civilisé et du primitif. Les sciences qui s'y rapportent sont les sciences de cette relation".

With Kepler the question of "why" is answered – the sun performs the role of a motion principle that gives rise to the revolution of the celestial bodies rather than the solitary star that rules and (en)lights them from "above and afar" ("*du haut et de loin*"). Against the presumed objectivity of science without a subject SM reinstates its role in science, a shift that the modern science, at least after the "quantum shock", could not afford to ignore. The meaning that he attributed to the Kepler's new look was no less prescient as more recent researchers came to confirm (Kozhamthadam, 1994; Goldstein & Hon, 2005).

As I have already mentioned, in parallel with these three books and also after SM has published a number of shorter interventions that help to clarify his arguments. Let me start by recalling a text that SM published in 1974, the same year as the "*Animaux Domestiques*", in already prestigious journal *Communications*, an article entitled "Our biunic societies" (*Nos sociétés biuniques*). The text was again published (2012a) in a special issue assembling former contributions by distinguished authors such as Adorno, Benjamin, Eco among many others. Each article was followed by a commentary from invited scholars. For the SM's article it was the philosopher Schaeffer who was invited. He begins by admitting his surprise about reading such an actual text, adding his regret that throughout the career he has barely read social psychologists. On this account Schaeffer is certainly more the rule than an exception.

The invitation, one might presume, was likely due to the fact that Schaeffer (2007) had published 5 years before a highly acclaimed book entitled "The end of the human exception" where he had a naturalistic vision opposed to the putative unnatural specificity of Man. One also understands his surprise to read a text by an unknown author, at least to him, sustaining a thesis so close to his own ideas, only the one written almost 40 years earlier. I can not resist recalling a similar surprise reported by Bruno Latour, another famous French author in this field, when he writes in a footnote of his book *Politiques de la Nature* published in 1999 : "*On trouvera dans Serge Moscovici (1977/1968) "Essai sur l'histoire humaine de la nature", une de ces exceptions d'autant plus précieuses que son livre a trente ans*" (Latour, 1999, p. 301).

In the article "Our biunic societies" we find the same ideas discussed at greater length in the former triad, but summarized here in a concise manner. He starts to "deconstruct" the narrative about the exceptionality of the human grounded on the alterity, namely the search of specific attributes-language, technique, rules, etc., "the difference that makes a difference" in Bateson's sense, not only as differences but in what they point to a superiority man over animal, man over another man, either in terms of property or in terms of religion, or still of man over woman. A consequence of such a common-sense shared by both the "man in the street" and the scientist, as denounced by Merleau-Ponty in his lectures on "Nature", leads to the concept of "*hominisation*" understood as a process of "*dénaturalisation*" as well as "*désanimalisation*". Becoming a man would then consist in operating a break first with his biological dimension, cul-

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minating with the split that separates the mind from the body, the part that escapes from the animality of the other by which it could have been contaminated.

With regard to the alleged distinctive features, SM argues that all attributes and their interdependence are more important. In other words, the differences would be more structural than substantial. Man is not the only symbolic animal, although in man the symbolic function might eventually be more frequent and intense. The transition from animal to man would therefore be the transition from a totality to a new totality. Man has lived for a long period in the animal world but it is now animals that live in a world of men that does not or should not mean a kind of escape from nature, even less from hierarchy or domination. We have come a long way since the Sophocles' exaltation of the prodigious dominant powers of Man over wild beasts. The great majority of the well-informed observers know that there are close links between all living beings and, as SM remarks "they seem to conspire in a sort of a "*coup d'état métaphysique*" to justify a situation of exception of the man projecting him to outside the natural and biological history". Besides, the empirical investigation shows that the gap between animal and man is much smaller than it was imagined some decades earlier. Since 1974, the year when SM was writing, such evidence has received a growing confirmation.

A second "*idée-force*" underlying the concept of "biunicity" is the concept of "sociality" (*socialité*) traceable both in animals and humans. Our societies are biunic, sustains SM, just like our brains. Societies have never started, they continue. The genesis of our world should not be considered as a transition from nature to society, but rather as a transition from a society to another one. Or, more precisely, as it was already remarked, the transition from the "*affiliation*" societies known by both primates and hominids, to the "*filiation*" societies based on the human family. However, one may wonder whether the present trend in our postmodern society would not be the opposite, if we do not move towards a more affiliative society. The thesis of SM is linked here to the theorization of incest introduced by Lévi-Strauss, whose universality is today much less consensual among scientists. We may recall once again other conflicting polarities coming back to the tragedy of Antigone, where the conflict between man and woman is enhanced by other no less relevant polarities such as those opposing youth to elderly, living to dead, divine justice to man's justice. In more general terms the biunic society conveys the implicit idea of a more abstract epistemic level, expressed in the tendency to think in terms of antinomies, to distinguish between a positive *versus* a negative side, the former inviting to cooperate and the latter – to compete.

SM appeals here to a new "*épisteme*" – a concept that reminds Foucault although the two authors have little in common-in which the social becoming of the human would be amount to the human becoming of the social (*le devenir social de l'humain serait le devenir humain du social*). His utopia refers to a society formed by a multilinear as well as a multidimensional constellation of societies. Another epistemological idea that is no less relevant is related to the relations between society and nature. Examining other alternative forms of thinking about such relations, he focuses on the transdisciplinary perspective of the systems theory, proposed by Morin

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(1977). The systems theory as might be recalled is also an attempt to unify the field of science. SM has never accepted the idea of a Science written with a capital letter. Transdisciplinarity for him consists rather in the rhizomatic diversity of the various disciplines as well as in heterarchy rather than the traditional hierarchy opposing the sciences of the centre to the sciences of the periphery. In the same vein, he prefers regional epistemologies to a general epistemology. On the other hand, his reserves towards the theory of systems are due to its lack of precision along with excessive use of metaphors. Being transferred to other disciplines the notions eventually become poorer than richer.

For the new "*épisteme*" he proposes rather a kind of a neo-keplerian paradigm, the heterarchic paradigm, in order to overcome the traditional pecking-order that still prevails within the scientific field. The alternative to hierarchy is not in fact the anarchy, promiscuity and randomness to which scientists' common sense tends to reduce the representation of nature. Rather, as he sustains, the alternative is the heterarchy of dynamic systems, an example of which is given by hierarchic hamadryas among the primates and the heterarchic chimpanzees, as well as hierarchic human societies of "*cliques*" and heterarchic societies of "companionship" (*compagnonage*).

The advantage of the heterarchies is due more to the "*décentration*" rather than to the "decentralization" enabling the agents to exert their capacity of transformation while preserving a certain amount of their liberty and initiative. While the hierarchy gives priority to the control pursuing the ideal of optimizing the adaptation both "from" and "to" the environment, the heterarchical society, in turn, mainly aims to regenerate its creative capacities. The lack of hierarchy does not mean neither lack of sociality nor lack of collective efficacy, being an error as well as a temptation to attempt to find it everywhere. Once again, scientists are not free of being influenced by some enduring basic assumptions, derived from the "*Thêmata*" that condition the way they work with their research objects (Holton, 1975). In conclusion, SM stresses the role of the social sciences anthropology, sociology, social psychology in contributing to a better understanding of the impact of social phenomena on organic and evolutionary processes.

Many investigations on ethology, biology and animal psychology are conceptually unsophisticated, which could lead to weakening both the observational work and the theory. In his commentary written in 2012 to the article of SM of 1974, Schaeffer concluded that both converge towards very similar views. As remarked by Schaeffer, SM was right in arguing against the still supported thesis that human identity is not biologic because it is constitutively social It does not follow that this identity ceases to be biological. We may distinguish several modalities ranging from the species where the social organization is genetically fixed to the other extreme where the social reproduction is "exomatic", that is, non-genetic, of which the human species is the most complex example, but also found in societies of non-anthropoid primates and other mammals. To acknowledge the biological nature of the social does not imply the reduction of anthropology and sociology neither to ethology of instincts nor to genetic determinism. In many cases as claimed both by SM and Schaeffer it is, on the contrary, the methodology of the social sciences that most contribute to

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the advancement of our knowledge of the social structures of the non-human species. The most eloquent example of such a research strategy is given by the Kyoto school of the comparative sociology of primates, initiated by Kinji Imanishi several decades ago. While the social sciences have much to learn from biology and neurology, it is also true that the non-human ethology could also have much to learn from the social sciences, whether in theoretical models or methodologies, or even in observational techniques.

2 Militancy

After this brief introduction to the theory, let me now recall the activity of SM as militant or, in his own words, how ecology becomes ecologism or how he questions in one of his texts what leads the ecologists to engage in politics. The main source for this second part is the anthology "*De la nature. Pour penser l'écologie*" published in 2002, organized with the collaboration of the anthropologist Pascal Dibie. The texts therein assembled cover the period from 1972 to 1991, the year when SM left the Green movement.

Interviewed by Laurence Bardieu, he gave several reasons for such a decision: their refusal to adopt a clear position against Le Pen at the electoral level, their association with the communists who never had any sympathy for the ecological movement, their pacifism which, for SM, was not a responsible attitude. He further added that the ecologists had come to confine themselves in a sectarian ghetto while their one only congruent alliance should be with the socialists. Historically, he claimed, ecologists were the heirs of socialism. At any rate this severance did not turn out in any lack of solidarity with the ideals that inspired the ecological movement. The political ecology was born in France and if during the 19$^{\text{th}}$ century everyone was a socialist today, as often argued, everybody is an ecologist. Having started from the initiative of an"active minority" it has now become a hegemonic "thêma".

In the year 2000 Moscovici received the Cervi award for his contribution to the ecological cause. On this occasion he delivered a paper entitled "Ecology and Ecologism" in Ravena, in which he once again offered his reflections about some less desirable features of a movement of which he was one of the founding fathers. Incidentally, it is worth to mention that this was not the only award that SM received for his ecological activism. Twenty years earlier, in 1980, he received the award "In Media Res" attributed by the Burda Foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany. It should be mentioned that his militancy never meant any sort of a moratorium on the theory. On the contrary, the theoretical concerns are always present as a way either to ground his practice or to mobilize new adherents. As an activist he did a little bit of everything. He rode a bike through the streets of Paris, eventually he would certainly be happy to see, years later, that the idea has made his way, thus confirming his theory of conversion processes. He also did not refuse what a malicious Portuguese politician ironically dubbed "the handicrafts of politics" such as to affix posters on the walls, distribute leaflets, pay visit to the residents of the district (*arrondissement*) to which SM ran as a candidate, supporting as well René Dumont, well known professor and

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thirdworldist as a candidate for the Presidency where he succeeded to get 1% of the votes.

At the Ravena's conference SM addresses the issue of the links between theory and practice, between ecology and ecologism, from an epistemological perspective. A parallel attempt is apparent in the long interview he accorded to Jean-Paul Ribes – "*Pourquoi les écologistes font-ils de la politique ?*" in 1978 and reformulated in 2000. These two texts, the Ravena conference and the reviewed interview, both written in 2000, presumably reflect how SM had lived his rich experience as an ecologist and what philosophical balance he had made of such experience. Politics implies to take options, to make alliances, to design strategies, to draft programs, and all of this is clearly expressed in the interviews as well as in the given conferences. Throughout those texts one may construct a closer image of the citizen SM, of the political positions he had espoused, of how he had embedded his "*question naturelle*" as a new topic into the political agenda of the polis in a such way that in doing so it became one, if not the most central, problem s of our time.

Anyway, it is not impossible that innovative movements, whatever they are, may end up by being absorbed by the powers that be, as SM has so brilliantly shown with the paradigmatic example of how the catholic church has conciliated its doxa with the heterodox tenets of psychoanalysis. Why would the ecological movement be an exception?

This is the main interrogation which, as I see it, is at the centre of his reflection in Ravena.

After recalling the three "movements" of his first three books, and emphasizing again the central role of the politics of science in the thematization of the *question naturelle*, in one of those "quantum jumps" so characteristic of SM's way of thinking, oscillating diaectically between figure and ground, comes to claim that, contrary to the common view, ecology was not the cause but rather the consequence of ecologism. In other words, it was the (political) action that triggered the attention of scientists. As SM recalled, the reaction began very early on occasion of the Stockholm conference in 1972, which in itself represented the entry on the stage of a new actor : the technocrats, closely associated with the notion of the "environment" with its implications for resource management and conservation. If, as Ionesco said, philology leads to crime, the case of the role of science and technology in changing our relation with nature could be an illustration. Invoking the environment instead of nature means to put the emphasis on pollution as it was empirically confirmed by studies conducted in Portugal that show that the social representation of nature evokes rivers, forests, animals are rarely associated with pollution (Castro, 2002).

This semantic shift reducing the *question naturelle* to local accidents, whether they are of Chernobyl dimension, which technoscience, if it is not yet able to prevent sooner or later, will do, has led to distort the intention of a movement, surely with certain utopian overtones, but which was waiting for a new form of life, a new "natural contract" to evoke the expression of Serres (1990), another French visionary. Twenty years after Stockholm, at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the

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Heidelberg appeal, signed by a number of scientists, was launched. "The authorities in charge of our planet's destiny against decisions which are supported by pseudo-scientific arguments or false and non-relevant (irrelevant?) data. The greatest evils that huntour Earth are ignorance and oppression, and not Science, Technology and Industry." Later on it became known that the appeal was supported by the asbestos and tobacco industries.

The ecological technocracy had eventually succeed in having the last word, in obtaining resignation, silence if not the agreement of the public opinion. Let us listen to his own words addressing to his audience in Ravena : "*De même que Weber déplorait le retournement de l'idéal d'émancipation dans la cage d'acier que fabrique le capitalisme,de même je crains le retournement de l'idéal de ces mouvements de protection et de réssurection de la nature dans la cage des hommes que devient leur environnement vide,sans rapport à la vie, à leur vie. On pourrait mieux dire, au lieu d'une cage d'acier,un sarcophage de béton tel celui qui à Tchernobyl, enferme les forces déclenchées,mais pour combien de temps? La nature, cage d'acier ou sarcophage de béton inhabitable, la mélancolie de l'avoir perdue et les espérances que nous y avions mises déçues, tous nous ont conduit à une panique après l'autre*".

It is not easy to escape from the "technocratic voluptuousness", another Weber's expression evoked by SM, which could explain why even voices from the political left might ask "what do you want, jobs or ecology ?" SM had no illusions about the singularity of his convictions and even less about the ironic condescension that they would be received even by his academic colleagues. In 1978, interviewed by the magazine "Lui", he showed that he was aware that the reaction to his positions among his colleagues was in general unfavourable or patronizing. People feel compelled to tolerate ecology due to its salience and pressure of public opinion. But deeply inside everyone hopes that the problema will disappear. For the left, he adds, our discourse lacks coherence, not enough scientific, not enough structured. For the right our discourse is anarchic, finally we would be but disguised leftists. Notwithstanding the melancholic tone of such remarks, enhanced with the technocratic hegemony that has increased, instead of decreasing after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it would be erroneous to conclude with a pessimistic turn to which SM never yields.

In the very same year of 2000 at the Ravena conference SM reformulated an extensive text he had written for a book edited in 1976 by Touraine, a sociologist with whom he always maintained an intellectual complicity, under the title "The re-enchantment of the world" (*Le réenchantement du monde*). Even by granting the Weber's diagnostic about the modern world and acknowledging the pervasiveness of the "technocratic voluptuousness", it does not necessarily give in to the blackmail of the absence of an alternative, that sort of double blind condemning us to passivity and resignation. This is not the final attitude that SM addresses to future generations.

This final word is, if I have understood correctly, the hope that always remains in every Pandora's box. For SM, there are two human characteristics that help to maintain our trust in the future of humanity : curiosity and passion. It is curiosity that leads to discovery and invention, it is passion that leads to great deeds, as Hegel reminds us. Throughout his analysis of the historical process, SM draws our attention for the

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permanent oscillation between the two focal points of Kepler's ellipse, as a metaphor for the dialogue between the two states of nature : the organic and the mechanic.

For SM, the "question of nature" ultimately consists in the political choice of the state of nature historically constructed and reconstructed by men in their interaction with the material world. As Geerz (1973) suggests, echoing Weber, "man is an animal suspended in Webs of significance that he himself has spun". In the same vein, now in terms of culture SM confronts the Romanticism with the Enlightenment, suggesting once again a new look not in disjunctive terms of or/or but in dialogical terms where the figure of the other is always present be it in the shadow but never suppressed.

Goethe's Faust becomes an avatar of the Janus Bifrons, like the scientist who desires to leave the laboratory accompanied by his grandson Nietzsche to breathe the light air of the mountains. Nowadays, SM sees the emergence of a new paradigm, a new state of nature : the cybernetic state. After the mechanization of the world, comes what he calls the cybernatization of the world. The fundamental motive would be the contrast between automation and communication. Here begins a new stage for Humanity that, at best, could be a return to the "House of the Being" where SM has always invited us to dwell.

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