Touraine (1925-2023), a great sociologist

escrito por Lena de Botton | 10 de junio de 2023



Alain Touraine

Alain Touraine is undoubtedly one of the leading and best contemporary sociologists, known for his exceptional humanity. In 2010, he received the well-deserved Prince of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities. Throughout his life, he analyzed, valued, and promoted movements that transform society for the better, always concerned with the capacity for action and providing social actors with scientific tools for societal transformation. From the beginning, he consistently shared the hopes that arose after the defeat of Nazism and throughout the 1960s, establishing himself as one of the main references in the media and universities.

Furthermore, when a reaction against those hopes emerged, with the media and universities filled with theories asserting that improvement was not possible or even desirable, Alain Touraine chose not to seek personal protagonism in that current. Instead, he remained faithful to citizenship and the social sciences themselves. He recounted how, during those years of reaction, the halls where authors extinguished hope were packed, while those who supported them were marginalized.

One afternoon at the EHESS (School of Higher Studies in Social Sciences France), I was deeply impressed by his

human and scientific qualities. Accompanied by a fellow doctoral student, we passed by his office. Though there were very few people present, Touraine, then around 74 years old, was actively working. As we greeted him, being students in his seminar, he invited us in. We spent an hour in his office, engaging in dialogue about our work. He posed thought-provoking questions to help us delve deeper into our analysis, all the while creating a relaxed atmosphere with profound discussions.

Alain was vibrant and lively during public events where societal transformation was discussed, as well as in personal relationships with those who held great worth. He experienced deep and meaningful friendships, love, and the best feelings that humanity has ever created. Though he is no longer with us, we are left with the testament of a remarkable person and an outstanding sociologist who consistently championed the best. In a commentary on the book «Sharing words,» he eloquently elucidates the focus of his work:

> *Sometimes, as demonstrated here by Flecha, knowledge emerges from grassroots sources, where individuals without formal education contribute to cultural analyses based on their experiences, thoughts, and exchanges within their own culture.*