

Going beyond organized modernity : The Age of environmentalism ?

The programme entitled *Les Jours Heureux*, which was adopted by the National Council of the Resistance on 15 March 1944, came as glimmer of hope piercing through the darkness of war, shining at its brightest after the Liberation of Paris, and spreading its influence over French society as a whole. Out of this programme came the wind of change that brought together a national pact which sought to overcome divisions and restore unity to the collective body.

This new deal took the shape of a so-called "State of regulation and anticipation" which was designed to establish a form of civil society while empowering the individual, by opposition to the Vichy experiment which was based on the Labour Charter. Founded on the two pillars that were economic growth and the welfare state, it was meant at reaching a new balance of social forces. With reconstruction came a new period of prosperity. The liberal orthodoxy, which had been swept away by the war, was then replaced by a new philosophy which was both interventionist and solidarity-based.

All efforts were combined in the Monnet Plan, the number of nationalizations increased, while keynesianism reached its climax. State supervision of the economy was introduced in order to foster economic growth, which reached an average 5 % annual rate. Recession was no longer in season and the growth dynamic was such that the 1970 Nobel prize in economics, Paul Samuelson, went so far as to declare: "But for a modern 'mixed economy' in the post-Keynesian era, fiscal and monetary policies can definitely prevent chronic slumps, can offset automation or under-consumption, can insure that resources find paying work opportunities."

Economic growth then fed the entire society. Sharing the fruit of economic growth became the very foundation of the postwar social contract. The erosion of that foundation alone, could call the question this legacy. With the establishment of a social State, the act of providence was transferred from the religious to the political sphere, from uncertainty to certainty. The social State thus aimed at eliminating risk by securing individual trajectories. It came as a resource which, by means of social property, provided the individual with the tools to exercise his autonomy.

Boosted by economic growth, the welfare state achieved an organized modernity which impacted on the class-divided society within the French nation-state. Nevertheless, and despite the neoliberal prophecies, the radicalization of the role of the State never led to a collectivized society, that is to say to the fall of civil society and the individual. On the contrary, social property actually strengthened both. Thanks to social law, which extended the abstract rights inherited from the Revolution to the economic and social spheres, the State liberated the individual from the traditional solidarities he was subjected to. This introduced a measure of 'disembedding' of the market from society as opposed to a form of 're-embedding'. Meanwhile, by extending the fields of intervention, the State favoured the gradual emergence of a civil society organized as a counter-power.

The shift took place in the 1960s. A series of reports were published throughout the decade, starting with the *Report on the Obstacles to Economic Expansion*, released by the Rueff-Armand committee. All of them are in favour of liberalizing the economy and insist on cutting public spending. The integration of France to the common market, started in 1957 and completed in 1968 with the abolition of tariffs, threw the country open to international trade. This outside economic factor had a direct impact on domestic social policies. In 1967, the very principle of the social state was called into question for the first time, by means of the Jeanneney orders, which no longer posited it as a political tool meant to guarantee social cohesion and collective well-being, but as an economic tool solely meant to balance the budget.

During the 1970s, the State was repeatedly attacked by the right as much as by the left. As far as the right-wing is concerned, the critical analysis led by the neo-liberals was obviously gaining momentum, following the relative failure of the first Keynesian stimulus programme launched by the Chirac government in 1975. Fighting inflation and public deficit became the priority of the Barre government. The left-wing, led by the 1968 PSU-CFDT partnership, proceeded to attack the State on account of its part in the loss of responsibility of civil society. The concept of self-government brought together the non-statist, often christian, left, which defined itself in opposition to communism, as the totalitarianism of Eastern countries was condemned new philosophers. This unexpected meeting ground between the market apostles and the advocates of social experimentation contributed to weakening the social state at a time when the economic crisis was strongly affecting the country. The combination of the decrease of productivity rates, the drop in the profitability of capital, rising inflation, and the collapse of the international monetary system, contributed to amplifying the crisis entailed by the first oil shock in 1973. The increase in unemployment, that no policy seemed to be able to curb, occasioned more instability and contributed to shaking the foundations of the Welfare State.

Deep down, what was really at stake behind those attacks on the State, was the coming of age of the process by which both the individual and civil society were to reach emancipation. The State, which spearheaded the process, thus fell victim to some kind of oedipal conflict by which the father was to be killed. Both the individual and civil society which he had fathered, turned against him. Here lie the origins of what many have labelled 'post-modernity', that is to say the collapse of 'the Grand Narrative'. The weakening of the state brought about the crisis of progress, the end of ideology, that is to say the 'disenchantment of the world', which is to be understood as the end of a world built upon a religious monad, the end of a mythical Unity to be recovered, and the advent of an entirely autonomous world. The outbreak gave birth to a multiplicity of new social movements which all shifted the struggle away from the world of work which had until then been the cornerstone of organized modernity: student movements, women's rights movements, etc. Environmental movements also. Their specificity being that they strive to formulate an all-including approach, which does not necessarily deny the existence of defining features. This explains why environmentalism stands at the crossroads of regionalist, antimuclear, pacifist, anti-development, and third-worldist movements, etc.

By means of all those movements, environmentalism questions the modern world hubris. It therefore plays a part in postmodernity inasmuch as it denounces all forms of centralization, concentration, and generalization which are harmful to all forms of

defining features. But, paradoxically, environmentalism manages to go beyond postmodernity in so far as it enounces a new 'Grand Narrative', the 'Grand Narrative' according to Edgar Morin, that is to say the rediscovery of nature. Nature is here a new heteronomy signifying to man his own limits. The report released by the Club of Rome in 1972 proves it, together with the economic research carried out by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. Nevertheless, according to the environmental theorists such as Jacques Ellul, Bernard Charbonneau or André Gorz, all libertarians, this heteronomic nature is to be seen as a basis for self-government against a form of servitude imposed by a world that is fully social, functional, normative and promoted by organized modernity.

In this paper, I will therefore explore the internal tension between self-governement and heteronomy within environmentalism, while replacing it in the context of the organized modernity crisis from which it stemmed. What is at stake is to determine whether, in the new ongoing modernity crisis, environmentalism can gain momentum and triumph, or whether it shall remain a utopia, which although it might generate emancipation opportunities, will continue to be marginal in its influence.