

## The subject actors and new social movements: A review of Alan Touraine's thoughts

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Review Article                      Main Object: Multidisciplinary                      Scope: France</p> <p>Received: 14 August 2023                      Revised: 06 September 2023                      Accepted: 12 September 2023                      Published online: 19 September 2023</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>                      Alain Touraine,                      post-modern society,                      social movements,                      subject actors.</p>	<p>Alan Touraine (1925-2023), one of the great French sociologists, can be called the sociologist of tomorrow. In his various works, he has depicted the end of an era of human life and the beginning of a new era. The end of the post-industrial society and the beginning of the post-modern society is Touraine's main hypothesis. The ultramodern society is based on communication and on the axis of a new actor called the active actor (subject). Touraine tries to show the characteristics of this new society and the difference between the active actor and the social actors of classical sociologists. Touraine's thoughts are the opposite of all classical sociologists and great people of his time. He tries to free action from all social and transpersonal constraints. Requirements resulting from sociability, and concepts such as progress, and historical evolution and a phenomenon called social systems generalize action in the century that has come to an end from Thorne's point of view. From Touraine's point of view, the understanding of current social developments in Europe and especially in France depends on a correct understanding of new social movements. Unlike the past movements, these movements are active, free and autonomous. The movements of the 20th century were passive social activists. In this article, the way to reach Touraine's theory is examined and reviewed.</p>

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **Background**

Alain Touraine became interested in sociology in the 1950s when France was at the height of industrialization. Raymond Aron and Georges Friedman were two of the most influential figures of French sociology. Sociology is undoubtedly still inspired by David Emile Durkheim. Touraine, along with young sociologists such as Michel Crozier, Henri Mendras, Jean-Daniel Reynaud and Renée Anton. They joined Friedman's group and began working under his watch. Touraine began his scientific research in the sociology department of industrial work. He went to the Renault factory, where he spent some time researching, which had a profound effect on the formation of his ideas. As a result of this field research, the question of the consciousness of the working class was given his special attention.

### **Aims**

This article is an attempt to better understand Alan Touraine's ideas. His ideas are primarily based on the social and political developments of France. Understanding the realities of France today is also deeply connected with the theories of Alan Touraine. Alan Touraine's ideas are less well known in Iran, and only a few of his works have recently been published in Persian. This is an approach to his works and is based on reading all of his important works except those he has written on Latin America.

### **Methods**

This paper is based on the assumption that Touraine's ideas are the chapters separating classical sociology and the new evolutionary sociology. The fundamental concepts of Touraine's ideas challenge the foundations of classical and contemporary sociologists from Durkheim to Bourdieu. In particular, understanding Touraine's ideas is of great help to scholars who are looking to explore new social movements.

### **Discussion**

In the 1950s, there were two views of working-class self-consciousness. Intellectual society was heavily influenced by communist perception. The Communists believed that class self-consciousness was the result of the economic exploitation of the working class by the bourgeois class. The Communist Party, as the vanguard party, saw its mission to transform this social consciousness into political consciousness. Workers' movements were the result of this political consciousness.

The second approach was the view of American sociologists who believed that working-class self-consciousness was the result of feelings of inequality and exclusion from participation in negotiation

processes with employers.

Touraine's field studies led him to a different and different conclusion from these two approaches. He proposed a different theory in Touraine (1966) and in *Touraine, 1965*. In Touraine's view, class self-consciousness was rooted in the struggle between workers and the industrial labor organization over professional independence. Rather than seeking equality, wage increases or economic exploitation, workers. They sought to dominate the result of their work and maintain their autonomy and professional independence. The workers wanted to be more present in the process of industrial development and control the outcome of their work. In the eyes of Alan Touraine, work is like a work of art, the most important exposition of the individual in his environment. Separating the workers from their labor results in alienation. From this point, Touraine's attention is drawn to the individual, as a self-reliant and independent activist. This self-reliance and autonomy appear in Touraine's later works *The Return of the Subject or Subjective Actor*.

In the first period of his research, Alan Touraine came up with a hypothesis that had influenced his entire scientific life. He came to this important conclusion: the labour movement, in addition to its economic and social dimensions, has a cultural dimension as well. The war between worker and employer is not just about overtime and economic and social issues. There is also a war between two different interpretations of the work and its product. The worker considers his work to be the product of his creativity and art. However, the employer considers his money and capital the only factor of production. Second, Touraine concluded that the worker wanted autonomy and creative intervention in the management of the production organization. This independence led to the idea of emancipating the active and the activist's independence from the social systems that formed the most important basis of Touraine's ideas.

### **Conclusions**

With these two hypotheses, Touraine came up with the challenging theory of the end of society and the emergence of the subject actor. Activist agency, in his view, is a new phenomenon and a dividing chapter of the 21st century from previous centuries. Touraine tries to theorize the end of a century and the beginning of a new century. Touraine's main question is what are the features of the new society, which he eventually calls a postmodern community of communication? Who are the main actors in this society or what groups? What is the activist of this day, as the subject and not the passive social actor? And what does he want?

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The author declared no conflicts of interest.

**Author's contributions**

The author contributed to the original idea, study design.

**Ethical considerations**

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

**Data availability**

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the author on reasonable request.

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