Beat: Politics

MIN OF CULTURE PAYS TRIBUTE ICONIC SOCIOLOGiST EDGAR MORIN, WHO DIES AT 104 YEAR

“HUMANISM MADE PERSON” C.PEGARD SAYS

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USPA NEWS - In a short statement published on X on Saturday 30 May, President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to Edgar Morin, the philosopher and sociologist who died on Friday at the age of 104. He described him as a “soldier of the Resistance, militant and free spirit, writer and thinker of the century, defender of nature and peoples”, before summing him up in one striking formula: “Edgar Morin was humanism made person.” With “his kindness, his curiosity, he never stopped enlightening us. Complex thought, fruitful life, universal mind,” the president wrote, while extending “the condolences of the Nation” to his loved ones. His wife, Sabah Abouessalam Morin, had herself spoken of the “immense void” left by his death, but also of a courage, a moral demand and a fidelity to people and ideas that “will continue to guide us”.

PRES.MACRON’S MESSAGE: A NATION SALUTES AN “HOMME?SIÈCLE” (THE MAN OF CENTURY) This article is based on the official tribute released by the French Ministry of Culture, in which Culture Minister Catherine Pegard pays homage to Edgar Morin, iconic French intellectual, sociologist, who passed away today at the age of 1-4 years old, and is placed in the broader political and intellectual context of the reactions triggered by his passing.

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Culture Minister Catherine Pegard echoed that emotion in an official statement, calling Edgar Morin “one of the greatest French intellectual figures of our time”. She saluted an “untiring fighter for freedom, philosopher of ‘complex thought’ which he saw as a vital need for our persons, our cultures and our societies”. Far from the ivory tower, Morin is portrayed as an engaged intellectual who “sought the agreement of opposite truths” and devoted more than eight decades to questioning “our world, its crises and its hopes”. For Catherine Pegard, he will go on teaching us, even in death, “what it means to be human”.

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FROM RESISTANCE FIGHTER TO PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL
Born in 1921 under the name Edgar Nahoum, Morin’s first political gesture came as early as 1936, when he joined an organisation helping Spanish Republicans. From then on, his life unfolded under the sign of engagement, fuelled by anti?fascist and pacifist convictions. During the Second World War, while studying law in Toulouse in the so?called “Free Zone”, he entered the Resistance in 1942, joined the Fighting French Forces as a lieutenant and narrowly escaped death more than once, taking part in the Liberation and marching with the French army into Germany. It was in this clandestine period that he adopted the name “Morin”, a mishearing of the pseudonym “Magnin” he had chosen in reference to a character from Andre Malraux’s novel L’Espoir (The Hope), a telling mix of literature, hazard and political commitment.

POSTWAR YEARS: BUILDING A NEW CRITICAL LEFT
The post?war period opened a second foundational chapter: the first major essays, intense exchanges with fellow thinkers, and contributions to leading journals, many of them linked to the Communist Party. Still committed, he was already reflecting on Franco?German reconciliation and opposing the Algerian War. In 1950, Morin entered the CNRS, thanks in part to recommendations

from Vladimir Jankelevitch and Maurice Merleau?Ponty; the following year he published L'Homme et la mort (The Man & Death). From there, his intellectual activity expanded at high speed, deliberately interdisciplinary, ranging from biology to economics and from symbolism to sociology, laying the groundwork for what he would call "complex thought".

BREAKING WITH ORTHODOXY: A RADICAL FREEDOM TO THINK

Taking his distance from Stalinism, Morin was excluded from the French Communist Party in the early 1950s. Instead of silencing him, that rupture liberated him. In Autocritique, he asserted his freedom to think, then pursued this adventure of total intellectual independence in the journal Arguments and with the Editions de Minuit. As an indefatigable observer of society and its transformations, he refused any hierarchy of subjects: from the "yé?yé" youth generation to May 1968, from Renault factory workers to the inhabitants of rural Brittany, everything deserved to be looked at with the same seriousness. For Pegard, this capacity to embrace the whole social landscape without prejudice is part of what made him a singular figure in the French public space.

"LA MÉTHODE": A POLITICAL TOOL AGAINST SIMPLIFICATION

At the heart of Morin's legacy lies not just a series of books, but a way of approaching reality. His major work, La Méthode (The Method), published in six volumes between 1977 and 2004, explicitly rejects absolute truths in order to study reality as closely as possible in its complexity, its fragmentation and its contradictions. This method, which never left him, was as much an epistemology as a political act: at a time of ideological blocs and later of populist simplifications, it offered a way to resist binary thinking. In Catherine Pegard's words, his open and audacious thinking, "resolutely interdisciplinary", rested above all on a certain relationship to the world a refusal to separate what is, in fact, intertwined.

INFLUENCE BEYOND THE ACADEMY

French readers showed a particular respect for this unique voice and continued to follow it closely, as illustrated by the strong reception of La Voie: pour l'avenir de l'humanité (For the future of the Humanity), published in 2011. But Morin's reach went far beyond the university sphere. A researcher of international stature, widely translated and read around the globe, and the recipient of numerous awards, he inspired generations of students, teachers, researchers, artists and public officials. His ideas irrigate contemporary debates on education reforms, cultural policies, ecological transition and the future of democracy, often serving as a reference for those seeking alternatives to technocratic or purely market?driven approaches.

A LEGACY FOR POLITICS AND CITIZENSHIP

In the closing lines of her tribute, Minister of Culture, Catherine Pegard insists that through the concept of "complex thought", Edgar Morin leaves us "a unique legacy, a way of inhabiting the world that teaches us to connect ideas, to recognise interdependencies and to welcome contradictions without denying them". In an era marked by fractures, hasty certainties and the temptation of simplification, she argues, his work appears "more current and more necessary than ever". She addresses her condolences "to his family, his loved ones, his students and his readers", and underlines that his thought will continue to accompany "all those who refuse the simplifications of the world and who seek, through knowledge, to better understand the human condition". For a political system haunted by polarisation and short?termism, the passing of this "century?man" raises a demanding question: will France's leaders and citizens be able to live up to the complexity he spent his life trying to teach them?.../

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