



# THE NEW WAYER

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FRANCE'S CUTTING EDGE / 4



# APPEAL TO HUMANITY

JUNE 18<sup>th</sup> 2010 //// JEAN-PIERRE CHANGEUX

On June 18<sup>th</sup> 1940, Charles De Gaulle rallied the French resistance against German occupation through a legendary BBC broadcast beginning with the words "Ici Londres". 70 years later, national radio station France Inter commemorated this historic turning point by broadcasting 18 hours of live programmes from London, including 18 specially commissioned personal appeals from 18 key French thinkers. Each appeal urged listeners to learn the lessons of history by resisting in one way or another. Among them was Jean-Pierre Changeux, one of France's, and indeed the world's, leading lights of biology, neuroscience and cognitive science. During a breathtaking career, Changeux has made major breakthroughs in all these fields and published numerous books reflecting his immense and eclectic culture, which spans science, philosophy and art. Among these is the seminal best seller *Neuronal Man: The Biology of The Mind*. His latest publication, entitled *Découvrir (Discovering)*, retraces the astonishing itinerary he has followed since those formative school days he refers to in this appeal, which *The New Waver* has translated for its readers.

The world we live in is in crisis.

We are submerged by financial speculation, the arms race, the violence of ideological and religious conflicts; we are overwhelmed by injustice, unemployment, hunger, illness, isolation. Must hope disappear? Has a better world for everyone become an insane dream?

No! In order to pull through, let us strive to understand the causes, let us call on the infinite resources of scientific research to build a new project, let us do so using the brain, something all women and men have in common.

Let us resist!

The sciences of the brain teach us that we are capable of objective knowledge, of reason, of critical thinking and of imagination. And the brain has another aptitude, unique in the living world: it can empathise, so that all can aspire to the same desires of happiness and freedom.

So why this violent individualism, this retreat into identity politics, these divisions, all so exacerbated today?

It takes years for our brains to be constructed. From birth to adolescence, our social and cultural

environments leave their mark on our neuronal circuitry. Language spoken within the family, belief systems, traditions, the cultures and nations we belong to – all these things form the circumstances of each individual's story. In other words, it is chance encounters that make the difference!

Don't let us leave power to chance!

Let us resist!

Let us become fully aware that our brains are endowed with a plasticity that lays the future open to us. Let us understand the relative nature of the cultural and social differences that can exist between your brain and mine, between you and I. Our future lies in our sense of belonging to the same species, the same humanity.

I call upon women and men of good will to unite to form the future generations of this global citizenship, with an education freed from all communitarian constraint, a secular, universal education, compulsory and free of charge, an education through arts and science, that reinforces solidarity and fraternity while respecting differences.

It is by bringing this project to life in the minds of all the world's children, a project of the Enlightenment, that humankind will know how to invent a more peaceful, fair and harmonious world: "a happy life with and for others within fair institutions".

1. This quote, ("*une vie heureuse avec et pour autrui dans des institutions justes*") is from Paul Ricoeur's *Petite Ethique (Small Ethics)*. Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), was a French philosopher with whom Jean-Pierre Changeux co-authored the book *La Nature et la Règle (English title: What Makes Us Think)*, in which the neuroscientist and the philosopher lock horns over ethics, human nature and the brain.

A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



Above : Nexus Architecture x 110- 2002  
(Detail) © Studio Orta



A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



Above : 70x7 The meal, Act I, City of London, 2006 © Studio Orta

“I call upon women and men of good will to unite to form the future generations of this global citizenship”

Junior and Rouergue, among others. The latest, *A Quoi Penses-Tu?* (What are you Thinking about?) is due to be published in spring 2011 by Editions Hélim.

<http://laurentmoreau.ultra-book.com>

**STUDIO ORTA**, founded in Paris in 1992 by artists Lucy + Jorge Orta, is an interdisciplinary structure for the development of their artworks, events, performances and exhibitions.

Their collaborative work, which often deals with issues of sustainability, has been the focus of major solo exhibitions internationally, including OrtaWater, at the *Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa* in Venice (2005), the *Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen* in Rotterdam (2006), and the *Galleria Continua* in Beijing, San Gimignano, and Le Moulin (2007-8); Antarctica, held at the Biennial of the End of the World, Ushuaia, and the Antarctic Peninsula (2007), and the *Hangar Bicocca spazio d'arte* in Milan (2008); and Amazonia, held at the Natural History Museum, London (2010). In 2007, the artists received the Green Leaf Award for artistic excellence with an environmental message, presented by the United Nations Environment Programme in partnership with the Natural World Museum at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway.

[www.studio-orta.com](http://www.studio-orta.com)

**PHILIPPE ROUX** lives and works in Paris. After training to be a cabinetmaker and following a brief stint as a crane operator, in 1980, he switched to illustration, contributing to a wide spectrum of publications. Since 1987, he has focused on etching. The illustrator of several book covers, he also receives regular assignments from French newspapers and magazines featuring drawings. Roux enjoys contributing to books aimed at young readers (notably "Monsieur Vadelavant" (Mr. Go-getter) / éditions autrement), as well as working as an art director, creating letters and typographical concepts.

**FELIX ROZEN** is a multidisciplinary visual artist working mainly at the crossroads of painting and music, while focusing on trans-generational memory. The Letters to Paul Klee series was featured in a one-man show held at the Jeanne-Bucher gallery in Paris in 2006. Also represented in major museums on both sides of the Channel and Atlantic, this Moscow-born painter, printmaker and installation artist based in France since the 1970s, has initiated numerous joint projects with musicians (notably at IRCAM and the Center for Music Experiment at La Jolla) and specialists in neuroimaging (at NYU).

THE NEW WAYER – FRANCE'S CUTTING EDGE / 4 – QUARTERLY

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20 euros

Printed and bound in Belgium - Janvier 2011

ISBN: 978-2-7467-3017-5 - Dépôt légal : février 2011