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lecture

Being the Right Size

Tuesday 13th January 2015

at 6.00pm

Simone WEIL amphitheater
5, allée Jacques Berque, Nantes

by

Olivier REY

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Olivier REY is a researcher at CNRS, mathematician and philosopher, member of the Institute of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IHPST, Paris). He taught mathematics at the Polytechnic School, and now teaches philosophy at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

He is the author of several essays:

Itinéraire de l'égarement. Du rôle de la science dans l'absurdité contemporaine (Le Seuil, 2003)

Une folle solitude. Le fantasme de l'homme auto-construit (Le Seuil, 2006),

Le Testament de Melville (Gallimard, 2011)

Une question de taille (Stock, 2014).

He has also published two novels, *Le bleu du sang* (Flammarion, 1994) et *Après la chute* (PGDR, 2014).

Theme

In a text entitled « Being the Right Size », the English biologist JBS Haldane showed that it is impossible to separate the form of a living being from its size: each type of life form, in fact, is only viable at a certain scale.

It is understood that the analogy between human societies and organizations is to be dealt with care. However, the decisive importance of size for organizations should make us more aware on the questions of scale in the organization of our societies.

According to the Austrian-American thinker Leopold Kohr: "Whenever something is wrong, something is too big".

This observation may be too general, however it can be applied in the present situation because on a closer look, most contemporary crises (political, economic, ecological, cultural) are related to scale overruns.

Therefore, it seems more urgent than ever to consider the causes of disdain by modernity for size issues and ways to address them, if at all possible.