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Programme Eurias (co-financé par la Commission européenne)
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Lecture

Sapiens, A different species

Tuesday January 14th 2013

At 6:00 pm

Amphitheater IEA/MSH
5 allée Jacques Berque, Nantes

By

Alain Prochiantz

Alain Prochiantz is Professor in Neurobiology and holds the Chair "Morphogenetic Processes" at the Collège de France. He received his PhD from University Denis Diderot in Paris and is a former fellow of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS). He has been head of the CNRS unit "Development and Evolution of the Nervous System" and has chaired the Department of Biology at ENS. After working on the structure of plant viral RNAs during his thesis, he started to work on neuronal development and brain morphogenesis. Among the main scientific contributions of his laboratory are the discovery of a novel signalling mechanism based on the intercellular transfer of homeoprotein transcription factors and the study of the developmental and physiological functions of this pathway. Based on the analysis of how these proteins travel across biological membranes, his laboratory has identified the first transduction peptides capable of addressing pharmacological substances into the cell interior. Currently he is head of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Biology at Collège de France. In addition he is a Member of the French Academy of Sciences, President of the Research Committee of the Foundation for Medical Research (FRM), and Adjunct Professor at the Korean Advanced Institute for Science and Technology (*South Korea*). In 2011, he was awarded the Grand Prix Inserm for his overall contribution to neurosciences.

In addition to his scientific work, Alain Prochiantz has written several articles and books aimed at the general public. With his friend Jean-François Peyret, he has participated in the writing of several scientifically-oriented theater plays. Their last play "*Ex Vivo / In Vitro*" was created at Théâtre de la Colline in November 2011.

Theme

"The evolution reminds us of our inorganic origin as well of our ties to the living world. To be born, to evolve, and to pass away: we are not machines, it is undeniable (not everyone can be a machine). Our affiliation to the animal world is just as obvious but it doesn't make us apes, not even chimpanzees who yet are our closest cousins. What events led up to this distance from animality and how can we think this very essence of human beings?"