

A close-up portrait of Bruno Latour, an elderly man with grey hair, wearing a dark patterned jacket over a light blue shirt and a dark patterned scarf. He is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred bookshelf.

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# **BRUNO LATOUR**

## **the ultimate interview of the most famous french sociologist**

A 2x52' and 11x12' film

Directed by Camille DE CHENAY & Nicolas TRUONG

Produced by ARTE FRANCE & YAMI2

# SUMMARY

Bruno Latour had never given long interviews. At the end of October 2021, he asked Nicolas Truong, a leading reporter for Le Monde and a specialist of *La vie des idées*, to revisit his fifty years of research. These interviews, spread out over four mornings, were intended to complete in another form, this time an audiovisual one, the whole of his singular and striking work. With great finesse and not without humor, **Bruno Latour takes up and pursues the most important elements of his thinking on camera.**

«*The most famous and misunderstood of French philosophers*» - according to the New York Times - has been one of the most influential thinkers in the world since the 1990s. Bruno Latour has left his mark on his era with a dozen fundamental works, translated into more than twenty languages and awarded the most prestigious prizes



In the first film, Bruno Latour explains how we have changed our world, why ecological disasters force us to close the parenthesis of the three centuries born out of the Enlightenment, going so far as to declare «*the end of modernity.*» The work of researchers in the natural sciences has, over the last fifty years, turned our knowledge upside down. We live on a thin skin a few kilometers thick that covers the globe and that some scientists call «*critical area*» and that Bruno Latour calls, in turn, «*Gaia*». Yet the «*habitability*» of our «*new earth*» is so threatened that we must stop living off the ground and «*stay grounded*»: to put an end to the mechanisms of destruction requires us to rethink our bonds with all living beings, to invent new ways of existing and to take on a political confrontation between the extractivists and the ecologists. For only a «*new ecological class*», conscious of this change of cosmology and proudly taking on its historical role, will be able to make the Earth habitable.



In the second film, Bruno Latour exposes the roots of his philosophy, those of the life styles, in order to know how to orientate oneself in a damaged world. Having come to ecology through the philosophy of science, he goes back to the very roots of his research on the human mechanisms that claim the emergence of the « *truth* », to his work in the sociology of laboratories, in which he observed that science is not given, but socially constructed and made of countless controversies. What does it mean to speak religiously? What does it mean to speak legally? What is speaking politically? Is there a truth of the religious, the juridical and the political? A way of investigating circumstantial truths and of conceiving philosophy as the discipline that allows us to approach the totality without ever managing to embrace it.



# 11' EPISODES

## Episode 1: A Whole New World

**The world of abundance, where we considered the elements of the Earth as objectifiable things, is over.**

In the “modern” world, we thought that our universe was made of objects known by science and obeying its laws. The climate and health crises force us to reposition ourselves as living beings in the midst of other living beings, on whom we depend and who can threaten us. This revolutionary thought appears as important as the Galilean revolution.

## Episode 2: The End of Modernity

**Modernity is a term that simply defines a period of history – a period that is over.**

For the past hundred years, the belief in modernity has structured the world and considered its opponents as archaic. The motto “Modernize” means “abandon your past, separate yourself from the Earth”. Let us free ourselves from this injunction, to compose a new civilization – not modern, but ecological.

## Episode 3: Gaia: A New Earth

**“Gaia” is a concept and a myth necessary to free ourselves from helplessness in the face of ecological disaster.**

“Gaia” is a mythological, political and scientific term. The self-regulation of the planet is endangered by the development model of humanity, that treats the Earth as an inexhaustible resource. Before, we understood the world as infinite. Now we are “confined” to a tiny “critical zone” on the Earth’s surface, which must be preserved.

## Episode 4: Where to Land?

**Let us stop looking at things “from above”. To create a habitable world, let us land and describe our dependencies.**

Our political views are associated with the old world – of emancipation – and prevent us from solving the climate crisis. Let us stop looking at things “from above”. We must be “down to earth”, interested in the “pebble in the shoe”. This empirical analysis of our addictions should raise awareness and revolutionize our way of life.

## Episode 5: The New Ecological Class

**This new social class must put the planet’s habitability at the center of political debates.**

For three centuries, political battles between liberals and socialists have been about the production and sharing of wealth. These principles are inherited from the bourgeoisie, which defined itself as more rational than the aristocracy. The ecological class, a new “geosocial” class in the making, will view them as irrational because they threaten the habitability of the planet.



## Episode 6: Inventing Collective Devices

**When it is necessary to create collectives so that all have a “voice”.**

At a time when there is a dearth of political representation, how does individual speech contribute to collective thought? It is necessary to meet, to create spaces where all disciplines are equal, to be able to collect and associate their different affects and their knowledge. In order to give everyone a “voice” to build the world of tomorrow.

## Episode 7: The Truth of Religion

**At a time of unprecedented ecological crisis, Bruno Latour questions the role of religion in politics.**

With the advent of monotheistic religions, theology has always sought to interfere in politics by promoting itself as the “actual” truth. Today, ecology, through the climate crisis, could open a new field of reflection and new opportunities for theologians and the faithful.

## Episode 8: Science as it is Done

**Scientific practice must be brought back to the forefront: it is from the laboratory that science is done.**

It is in the laboratory that scientific discoveries and facts are established. Scientific practice is a wonderful process to observe. Through hypotheses, probabilities, experiments, peer review, certainty appears and the fact becomes “true”. As a matter of fact, science with a capital S does not exist, there are only scientific practices.

## Episode 9: The Modes of Existence

**What is society made of? Bruno Latour analyzes it as a “collection” of different modes of existence.**

Law, science, religion, politics and technology each define truth in their own way. But society, or the social collective, is precisely a “collection” of these different modes of existence or of “truth”. It is necessary to bring them together and to take them all into consideration in order to understand our world.

## Episode 10: The Circle of Politics

**How to unite the collective and the political in an era that refuses mediation?**

The process of uniting the collective is ubiquitous in our lives. But bringing together a multiplicity of people to speak with one voice involves betrayals and metamorphoses. We must first accept that a personal opinion and a given order can be altered. Only then can we move on to the political and truly unite the collective.

## Episode 11: Philosophy is so Beautiful!

**Philosophy is the guardian of the modes of existence, it guarantees the diversity of truths.**

Philosophy is a modest yet indispensable practice: it must find a way to unite modes of existence that do not have the same conceptions of truth. How does philosophy help the political, the religious, the scientific, the fictional and the other modes of existence respect and not annihilate each other?

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