



The thought of Roberto Mantovani: a link between mobilistic theories and a reflection about “Realism”

Federico Straser and Valentino Straser
Italy (ironstrass@gmail.com)

Simple ideas and forgotten personalities often are at the basis of scientific approach revolution. The boost necessary to start a process of change is sometimes favoured by the strong belief of prove an intuition which could represent the labor of a lifetime. This is what happened to Roberto Mantovani.

Roberto Mantovani was born in Parma (Italy) in 1854, he was a musician and a man of science and – between 19th and 20th century- also was the consul of the French island of Reunion. He represent an important personality for the Earth Science who, unfortunately, was forgotten for over a century. Only few years ago the figure of Roberto Mantovani was rediscovered thanks to the research of Carrey (1976), Muir Wood (1985), Gohau (1990, 1991), Scalera et Meloni (1991), and Giuseppe Scalera (1995). At the basis of the Mantovani’s thought there was the concept of “planetary dilatation”, later also trasposed to Earth dynamics. Roberto Mantovani was the forerunner of two important theories that dominated a big part of the 20th century: the theory of the “Continental Drift” and the theory of the “Earth Expansion”.

He was mentioned by Alfred Wegener as the forerunner of the mobilistic thought but he was also the inspirer of Samuel Warren Carrey’s theory. Mantovani can be considered the common ground between two important schools of thought which try to explain Earth’s evolution through the internal dynamics of our Planet even if using different concepts and, sometimes, are in sharp contrast.

As is often the case, scientific innovations are hampered by criticism and cold shoulder but nonetheless these endure over time.

Rediscovering scientists like Roberto Mantovani means resume the concepts at the basis of the modern theories about expansion of the oceanic floors and about global-scale mechanisms of orogenic dynamics.

The Mantovani’s idea arose from the observation of Saint Denis river where he noted a complementarity in volcanic rocks of the edges of the same river.

Later Mantovani trasposed this observation in a large-scale concept which appears to coincide in part with the “Continental Drift Theory” formulated three decades late by Wegener.

In conclusion the rediscovery of Roberto Mantovani’s figure is not just history but an opportunity to reflect on scientific investigation which may require new search criteria that at times deviates from “Galilean concept” by introducing the modern problem of “realism”.