

Farewell to Nenad

Dear Nenad,

There are many metaphors for Life: Life is a race, Life is school. The most common one is that Life is a struggle, but my favorite is that Life is a journey. For your and my forty or more years of life as colleagues and friends, I can say that our shared life was a beautiful journey. Over those long forty years, we traveled together, both literally and metaphorically. Literally, you from Rijeka and me from Split, when we were both hired at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar almost at the same time. That's where we first met... we were young! I remember the moment when you appeared at the door of my office and said: "I am Nenad... and I am Dunja..." and as usual (to which I later got used to), you asked for a book that I might have. I don't remember which one. And you immediately invited me to give a lecture at your department of Philosophy. At that time, you had already left behind your previous phases of philosophical life with Derrida, Foucault, as well as your professors in Zagreb, and you entered, as you said yourself, into the "labyrinth of analytic philosophy," and that's where we immediately bonded professionally because my interest has always been primarily language. Literal physical travel was complemented by conversations, reflections, discussions, debates, and trips to symposiums, mostly in Dubrovnik, at the IUC, and abroad.

Our journey and stay in Zadar, which I could call "romantic," were brought to an end by the fall of Yugoslavia, war and the war years. We were still traveling because we had to work even though we were all together in the shelter in the basement of the Faculty of Philosophy, under gunfire all around, without water and electricity. Many, including myself, feared for the lives of their children. But as if that wasn't enough! In 1991, the faculty leadership "wonderfully" decided that certain departments should definitely (!), I can freely say, be eradicated, the philosophy department being their primary target because there were so-called "political saboteurs" influenced by the Croatian Liberal Party. You and your assistants were their first targets as representatives of "false liberalism and Western democracy and whatever-kind-of analytic philosophy..." You were expelled, and I left shortly after.

But let's get back to our journey. It ended in Zadar, with a stormy northern wind, bura, as we would say in Dalmatia. But the journey didn't stop or end. First, with the financial help of our dear colleagues, Michael Devitt and George Rey, we traveled to Aix-en-Provence in 1993 for the European meeting on Analytic Philosophy, the largest gathering of European philosophers of analytical orientation. You were elected

president on that occasion. I was happy and proud because it was a sign of respect for you as the main promoter of analytic philosophy in the Balkans, especially in Croatia. Our journey quieted down a bit. It leaned more towards the southern wind (jugo) when the sea threatened subtly and when there was a bit of a sharp maestral. We had to fight for establishing the Department of Philosophy in Rijeka against the stubborn and unfounded resistance of the Ministry of Science in Zagreb. Perhaps the metaphor "Life is a struggle" rather than a journey fitted better in this period. The students were the loudest. Let me remind them a little, although many present know. Students shouted: "I think, therefore I can't study." "Political censorship of science." "Another attempt to marginalize Rijeka." "We want our professors." "I want to study philosophy in Rijeka now." But as Bob Dylan sings, Times are a-changing. Victory was eventually achieved, and the best analytically oriented department of philosophy in Croatia exists in Rijeka.

We found our new home together in Maribor, thanks to Bojan Bostner. Now we didn't commute to work anymore, I from the south, and you from the north like in Zadar, but our journey became completely mutual. We went to Maribor together in my already quite old Seat every week. And so, for 20 years, every week! In the car, we listened to music, mostly operas that you liked. In it, we devised all sorts of things: how to improve teaching, which symposiums to organize, planned trips, how to bring the greatest philosophical names like Davidson, Pietroski, Ludlow, Yagisawa, Jeff King, Stephen Neale, and many many others to Rijeka and Maribor. But it was also important how to spend evenings with our dear colleagues from Maribor.

Intellectually, for me (and I'm sure for others), you were a tour de force. You taught me that in philosophy, as in life, clarity, honesty, rationality, and creativity go hand in hand. We discussed many topics, especially in the philosophy of language, always from a naturalistic standpoint. In that regard, you didn't change my mind. I followed your footsteps with great enthusiasm but also opposed them. We were a real pair! Just as we were in this journal – the Croatian Journal of Philosophy – for twenty years, you as the Editor and me as the Advisory Editor.

And what were you like as I remember you: Honest to the end. As we would say in Dalmatia: Drito u sridu (straight to the point). You said: "We don't have to hide behind metaphors, stylistic circuses, erudition if we have it (and yours was immeasurable). We can say what we think directly to someone's face."

Yes, you were straightforward. You called the Ministress (I won't name her now) who forcefully wanted to abolish the Department of Philosophy "a puppet on the string" (completely deservedly). For her assistant, Mr. Z., you wrote that he was "one of the gravediggers of the Rijeka philosophy department." I didn't hold back either... I wrote: "Mr. Z., where were you when it was thundering?" You were extremely argumentative, with a mild irony. We all remember your columns in the newspaper Novi list

and lately in the Novi list supplement Vox Academiae. There are countless examples, but here's one more philosophical: "In 2010, the question of a posteriori knowledge was coming into fashion, while a priori was going out of fashion. Luckily, in these parts, we're always late, so we're always just ready for the next, reverse, phase."

You always loved to talk and discuss. In the car with you, I mostly listened and learned a lot. I recently found out that they sent you around the classrooms when you were in the first grade to tell the story of Ciplić Njuškalić (Snoopy Bream Fish). And that was the first story I've ever read! About that little fish that quietly and fearfully left the safe harbor and sailed out into the world. It seems that you and I started a journey that I try to describe long before it is documented here!

And now, at the end of our shared journey, there is no bura or jugo, or maestral but only unreal calm sea, Kvarner bonaca. I ask myself and I ask you too, as our favorite Croatian poet Danijel Dragojević phrased it in one of his last poems:

*I won't ask if you're still alive somewhere out there
Maybe you are, maybe you're not,
Maybe yes, maybe no.
Let the unspoken question
swing in doubt...
Without it, you're at any station, on all sides,
in freedom for all or nothing...
("Question" – by Danijel Dragojević)*

*And I'd add:
You are here in our hearts forever!
Thank you, Nenad, for everything.
Let the heavenly birds travel with you now!*

Read at the memorial in Rijeka, May 16th, 2024.

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