


In memoriam

Milestones in Nenad Miščević's Philosophical Career (1950–2024)

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Zagreb, 1965. Nenad's high school philosophy professor, as he himself recalled, always wore a spotlessly bright suit and a bow tie. He had a habit of addressing his pupils in a formal manner, which made a great impression on Nenad, who interpreted this as an ironic equality between teacher and pupils. The professor hosted the Marxist Circle, which Nenad, a self-proclaimed 'nerd,' joined in his first school year. Nenad adored writing papers and the Circle was a good opportunity for him to speak publicly, something he also enjoyed. For his first performance Nenad chose one of the Stalinist Informbiro books, which he thought would fit well with the nature of the Circle. After the presentation of the paper, the professor called Nenad aside to tell him that he had not been very lucky in his choice of topic: evidently, Nenad did not have the faintest idea what he was talking about in his presentation.

His mother was a professor of English and Russian, so to spite her, Nenad wanted to do science. Nevertheless, he asked the professor what this philosophy was that he was lecturing on. Even though the professor considered the fifteen-year-old Nenad too young for it, he suggested that he read Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. After reading the first hundred pages, the thick, brown book took him by surprise and changed his view on what he wanted to do with his life. As a high school graduate, Nenad became the youngest member of the Croatian Philosophical Society. 'Life was nice,' as he recalled.

Paris, 1978. Disillusioned with postmodernist philosophy, Nenad, in search of something else, accidentally discovered the Philosophy of Language seminar on Wittgenstein done in a somewhat analytical way. He soon came across the works of Quine, which he did not understand because of his continental philosophical upbringing. Everything changed

when Nenad began to read Austin, whose style made a great impression on him. Proving that something does not make sense does not necessarily mean hiding behind metaphors, literary theory, and erudition. A disagreement can also be expressed by means of arguments: with them we say openly what we think and do not seek to hide. Nenad thereby found out that philosophy can also be done in a different way from the continental one, i.e. in the analytical way. He received the advice that it would be good to start learning analytic philosophy by reading Dummett's book on Frege, the book that was very much in fashion in analytic philosophy back then.

Despairing of the postmodernist scene, Nenad abandoned his PhD in Paris, even though it was already finished, and began to work on a new one in Ljubljana under the analytical supervision of Frane Jerman. Here he finally obtained his PhD in philosophy and broke new ground in Slovenia concerning the philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, cognitive theory, and political philosophy.

Maribor, 1993. The first generation of philosophy students at the University of Maribor eagerly awaited their first lecture. Nenad entered the lecture hall, huge, alive, curious, a giant in every sense of the word. The embodiment of the students' idea of a philosopher, a Socrates of our time with an extraordinary talent for languages. An animator, an endless developer of ideas, a passionate debater, and an engaged public intellectual. One of the pioneers of analytical philosophy in Slovenia and, paradoxical as it may sound, one of the most influential ones, who always treated students as equal commentators. Nenad was able to explain philosophical problems, no matter how complex, in a simple way that everyone could understand. He was a versatile philosopher, which is rare nowadays. There was hardly a philosophical problem that did not attract Nenad's attention and hardly a philosophical debate to which he did not contribute original insights. Philosophy, which is regarded as an abstract discipline that explores complex questions about the world and society, sounded easy coming from his lips.

Philosophical thinking is generally believed to have few practical implications, but Nenad was proof to the contrary. Following the geographical and political changes in the former Yugoslavia, he engaged in public debates on human rights, civil liberties, democracy, nationalism, patriotism, etc. from the very beginning and significantly enriched the debates with his extensive interdisciplinary knowledge and incisive analytical mind.

Nenad's regular columns in the Rijeka newspaper called *Novi list*, his public appearances at round tables and his interviews, which are still today a model for clear, honest and reasoned public dialogue on the complex issues of coexistence, are, among other things, an invaluable contribution to the popularisation of philosophy. Nenad dismissed the myth that analytic philosophers were not politically and socially engaged critical intellectuals and always put the search for truth at the forefront. He was truly a Renaissance figure and the embodiment of philosophical eros. To meet Nenad was to be permanently influenced, and to be his friend was a privilege.

He will be greatly missed!