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In Memoriam

Igor Aristegi

1980-2008

From Literature to Science – through Philosophy



In July of last year Igor Aristegi left us. He was the editorial assistant of *THEORIA* and the one whom everybody addressed when matters of the journal were on the agenda. His death, in the prime of youth, leaves us with an overwhelming feeling of emptiness —but full of lively recollections and images: his tall silhouette of a basketball player, or his generous capacity of hard work that we had the privilege to share with him during one year; the remembrance of his philosophical lucidity and of a friendship that overcame all difficulties.

Igor was born in his beloved Beasain, a small town at the foot of Mount Txindoki in the Basque Country. At the University of the Basque Country he soon became an active member of many student initiatives that sought to pursue philosophy not only as a theoretical part of the curriculum, which was to be learned, but as a practical activity of knowledge and wisdom.

In 1999 Igor founded the student journal *Katiuska* at the University of the Basque Country. For two years he studied at the Università degli Studi di Genova (Italy), then he went to the University of Granada (Spain). Later, after having already obtained his degree, he went on to combine philosophical reflection with actual practice. For two years (2003 and 2004) he served as editorial secretary of the *Bulletin of the Sociedad de*



Lógica, Metodología y Filosofía de la Ciencia en España. Since 2005 he was the coordinator of the *Philosophical Seminar on Problems of Science and Technology* (PAFICYT) of the University of the Basque Country.

He understood doing philosophy as showing solidarity. He was always prepared to take an active role in the decisions that concerned the research group he belonged to regardless whether he fully agreed with them or not.

He was a passionate lover of literature and won several prizes in poetry and essay competitions (Beasain Prize 1998, Sartaza Prize 1998, “Interolerti” International Prize on Experimental Poetry 1999, ONCE Prize 2000, Oñate Prize 2000, ...) before he got fully engaged in philosophy after his graduation in 2003.

In the last few years he came to highly appreciate that the most relevant ingredients for every fruitful philosophical discussion are good faith and an open mind. He recognized this particularly through several research stays he spent at the philosophy departments of King’s College (London) and the University of Cambridge. There he had the opportunity to closely collaborate with philosophers such as David Papineau or Jane Heal whom he highly appreciated.

Igor was close to complete his formative period as a researcher with a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Thomas Mormann.

He had achieved a style of life and a way of self-obligation that pushed him toward the road of solitary introspection. In a fundamental sense introspection became one of the axes of his philosophical activity. Igor was fascinated by questions concerning mental states, the problems dealing with the human ability of understanding the contents of other mind whereby one arrives at the assumption that the other was as mindful as oneself. In particular he was interested in problems concerning the nature of mental states that we use to attribute to others. He always had the others in mind, as though he wished to distance himself from the task of understanding his own “other”.

His research concentrated on the analysis of the debate dealing with psychological processes that underlie the attribution of mental states, i.e., the so-called “mindreading” debate. More precisely, he studied how philosophical speculation and experimental investigations interacted in this realm. As Igor was able to show convincingly, the empirical findings concerning this issue of mindreading were less conclusive than one might have thought.

To obtain such a result Igor had to submit the pertinent scientific experiments of the two most important strands of thought of the mindreading debate a thoroughgoing conceptual analysis. This meant on the one hand that he scrutinized a research line that aimed at the individuation of mental mechanisms, on the other hand, he dealt with the approach that intended to find out the instantiations of mental mechanisms. He critically analysed the meaning of the results and the premises of the relevant experiments and came to the conclusion that they imposed only rather weak restrictions on the possible outcomes of the mindreading debate. According to him, a large part of the progress realized in the debate between simulationists and partisans of the “theory-theory”-approach (and other currents that later entered the stage) was based on introspective data and conceptual arguments.

Under his vigorous and gripping appearance he always gave the impression of a person that realized the highest standards of the academic tradition: loyalty, generosity, and commitment to the work of others. Nevertheless, perhaps, we, who took notice of these virtues in our daily work with him, did not fully know the other Igor who expressed himself in Basque in the following enigmatic poem:

*Ez hidan poesia eskatu
isilpeko grina osteru
bibur nendila izukaitz,
antzina bezala, buts begiak
zoruan*

*eta gero, langarra, zutabeak,
kupula finean,
hotz.*

~~~

*Zizareak zenbatzen, mutu,  
karizkiak lurrari eginez,  
barriak badu zerbait bere  
minean.*

(2008)

Perhaps he decided that it was time to become the stone about which the lines of this poem speak.

In THEORIA we will greatly miss him. His memory will stimulate us in our future work.

ANDONI IBARRA (editor)

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