

OBITUARY

## Philippe Mongin (1950–2020)

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On 5 August, the philosophy of economics community at large and *Economics and Philosophy* in particular lost one of their leading figures, Philippe Mongin, who edited this journal from 1995 to 2000. Through his illness, which he bore without complaint, Philippe retained his remarkable productivity and enthusiasm for issues at the boundaries between economics and philosophy, publishing here just last November an insightful retrospective on the Allais paradox, ‘The Allais Paradox: What it Became, What it Was, What it Now Suggests to Us’. This is not all: Philippe also has a paper that is just out in *Philosophy of Science*, and papers forthcoming at *Economic Theory* and *Synthese*.

An alumnus of the *Ecole normale supérieure* (ENS), Philippe began his remarkable intellectual path as a PhD student of Raymond Aron at the *Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS), completing a dissertation in 1978 on Marx’s *Grundrisse*, ‘La critique de l’économie politique dans les *Grundrisse* de Karl Marx’. (At the time, the *Grundrisse* attracted a great deal of attention, with the first translation into English in 1973.) Having completed his dissertation, Philippe reoriented his research from the intersection of classical political economy and philosophy to topics in economic theory, in which he became interested while visiting Cambridge in the mid to late 1970s, where he was particularly influenced by Frank Hahn.

Part of what made this change in direction possible was an early career position at the CNRS (*Centre national de la recherche scientifique*) through which he advanced, becoming eventually *Directeur de recherche de classe exceptionnelle*. His position at the CNRS allowed Philippe to pursue a lifetime of free scholarly exploration that is remarkable – indeed amazing – in its scope and variety. Over the years, with support from the CNRS, Philippe accepted visiting faculty positions at more than 20 major universities in France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, the USA, Canada, and Australia before settling at the end of his career at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciale* (HEC) in Paris.

In 1984, Philippe obtained his second PhD (habilitation) at the Université d’Aix-Marseille III with his dissertation, ‘Réexamen du déterminisme situationnel. Critique de quelques exemples monétaristes’, while also picking up a BA in mathematics that same year. Herbert Simon was one of his examiners and, in the early 1980s, Philippe also explored issues concerning bounded rationality. That

was just the beginning. Philippe went on to make important contributions to economics, most notably in epistemic game theory, the theory of social choice under risk and uncertainty, and the theory of judgement aggregation (which he preferred to call 'logical aggregation theory'). This was over-and-above his extensive and insightful work on fundamental topics in the philosophy and the history of economics, including the methodology of economic theories, the status of revealed preference, the normative standing of expected utility theory, value-neutrality vs. value-ladenness in economics, and the philosophical appreciation of utilitarianism, to mention but a few. Some of Philippe's most celebrated contributions are inextricably linked to both economics and its philosophical underpinnings, in a rare and exemplary symbiosis.

Over the course of his notably distinguished career, Philippe received major awards in France, including the *Ordre national du Mérite* (1995), the *Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur* (2004), the Maurice Allais Prize in Economics (2019), and the Grammaticakis-Neumann Prize of the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques* (2019).

Philippe and I became acquainted in 1985 when he submitted his essay, 'Are 'All-and-Some' Statements Falsifiable After all? The Example of Utility Theory', to *Economics and Philosophy*, the brand-new journal Michael McPherson and I had just co-founded. Although clearly focused on methodology, this essay, which appeared in volume 2 of the journal (it was to be the first of five papers he published here), already evidenced Philippe's concern with logical rigour and formal investigation, which was to take him toward his best-known results, which concern the joint aggregation of beliefs and preferences in the theory of social choice under uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

I got to know Philippe and his wife, the distinguished game theorist, Françoise Forges, personally during the 1994–95 academic year, when we were working at the Université de Cergy-Pontoise. In the 35 years in which I have been fortunate enough to know Philippe, he was over and over again extremely kind to me – and not only with respect to academic matters. Once, when my wife, Cathy, and I were in Aix-en-Provence, Philippe offered to give us a day's tour of Marseille (where he was born, and where he has been laid to rest), culminating in an authentic *bouillabaisse*. On academic matters, he was in my experience a rigorous, even-tempered, and brilliant critic, and he was extremely generous with his time. I recall him devoting a whole afternoon to giving me extensive and insightful feedback on my work on health measurement, even though it was remote from his own research. We co-authored one essay together, 'Economists' Responses to Anomalies: Full Cost Pricing versus Preference Reversals', in 1998 in *History of Political Economy*, but his influence on me – particularly his demand for rigour – extended far beyond this collaboration.

Philippe will be remembered in his scores of important essays, and his spirit will live on in the many scholars whose work he has influenced or with whom he has collaborated, and especially in the outstanding scholars whose careers he has

<sup>1</sup>See his 'Consistent Bayesian Aggregation', *Journal of Economic Theory*, 1995, pp. 313–351, and, for philosophical elaboration on his results, 'Spurious Unanimity and the Pareto Principle', *Economics and Philosophy*, 2016, pp. 511–532.

nurtured, such as Jean Baccelli, Mikael Cozic, Franz Dietrich, Marc Fleurbaey, Francesco Guala, Aviad Heifetz, Brian Hill and Marcus Pivato. I'm sure I can speak for them in expressing how deeply we all feel Philippe's loss. We shall miss him.