

PROFESSOR ANASTASSIOS KARAYIANNIS: AN OBITUARY

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ON January 14 2012, at the age of 56, Professor Anastassios Karayianis passed away after a short period of hospitalization following a severe stroke. He is survived by his wife Antonia and his three children: Dionyssios, George and Christina. His funeral service, held in his native island of Aegina, had over 200 family, friends, colleagues and former students in attendance. Anastassios was a distinguished contributor to academic economics, and especially to the history of economic ideas and method. He was also a man of principle and integrity, and much devoted to his students.

Professor Karayiannis held the chair in the History of Economic Thought at the Department of Economic Science of the University of Piraeus, Greece. He was born on the island of Aegina (near Piraeus) in October 4, 1955. After completing his undergraduate studies in Economics at the Athens University of Economics and Business, he finished his M.Phil. at the University of Dundee, Scotland and his Doctorate degree at the University of Piraeus. His first academic appointment was as a lecturer at the University of Piraeus in 1987, where he mainly taught courses in History of Economic Thought, Economic Methodology and Entrepreneurship. Anastassios served as a visiting Professor to a number of Greek and foreign universities including the University of Athens, Athens University of Economics and Business, the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, and Lappeenranta University of Technology (Finland). In his tragically short life, he published 12 original books, 3 textbooks, and had contributed over 100 academic articles in journals and edited books. He was also a member of the editorial boards in many academic journals including the *History of Economic Ideas*.

Professor Karayiannis had a lifelong passionate interest in the history of economics, with contributions ranging from the study of ancient Greek economic ideas to contemporary developments in economic thought. As an indication of his extensive contributions to his favorite research field, Anastassios had published papers in almost all of the specialist history of economic thought journals, including *History of Polit-*

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ical Economy, Journal of the History of Economic Thought, European Journal of the History of Economic Thought, History of Economic Ideas, History of Economics Review. A significant part of these contributions refer to the preclassical period including studies on the economic ideas of Democritus and Plato, of the Eastern Christian Fathers, and of the economic thought of Sir James Steuart. The classical school and especially the works of R. Torrens and N. Senior, was also the object of his research as were moreover the contributions of more modern economists as Th. Veblen, J. M. Keynes and L. Klein. The history of ideas about entrepreneurship was a theme which was of particular interest to Anastassios. His publications on the subject include entrepreneurship in classical Greek literature, and the ideas of Marshall, Veblen and Keynes concerning the function and the significance of entrepreneurship. The history of economic methodology was another strand of research linked to his interest in the history of economic ideas. In particular, Anastassios was interested to the process of the development of schools of economic thought and also of the historiography of economics.

Given the extent of his contributions and the space constraints, it will be impossible to even attempt to provide a very brief account of his work. However, there is a common idea which I think emerges from his historical works, and this is the high academic value that the detailed study and analysis of past ideas could offer to the understanding of current intellectual economic discourse. Furthermore, for him, historical research did not only serve pure academic purposes, but more importantly, it could provide insights to contemporary issues and problems. Anastassios thought that most current theoretical formulations and models can be traced back to the history of economics. Thus, research on the origin and on the historical development of modern concepts and theories, can shed light on, and even settle, contemporary theoretical disputes and economic policy controversies.

Apart from the history of economic thought and method, Anastassios had other research interests including, the theory of entrepreneurship, economic policy in Greece, and the economic and social institutions of ancient Greece. In the last few years, Anastassios had expanded his research interests even further to encompass the study of social values and institutions, and their effects upon economic activity and economic efficiency. Moreover, his wide research interests enabled him to publish in a diversity of journals such as the *European Journal of Political Economy, Bulletin of Economic Research, European Journal of Law and Economics, and Journal of Institutional Economics.*

Anastassios was an active promoter of the scientific and pedagogic value of the history of economic ideas as a subfield of economics. He was very disappointed by the recent trend towards downgrading its im-

portance in many undergraduate and graduate economic university programs, arguing that it was misguided and wrong, and that it will have, if the trend continues, serious negative repercussions for the future of economics. He believed that a sound knowledge of the history of economics as a subject, is vital for both the comprehension and the assessment of current economic theories and policies. In his words: «Historians of economic thought can be seen as the ‘guardians’ of past ideas and theories, and in general as the ‘guardians’ of past human wisdom and therefore, they are an integral part of the current and future academic community of economics» (Karayiannis 1998a, 25).

His belief in the importance of the study of the history of economic thought was not confined to his writings. He was an active member of many academic societies in the field, including the History of Economic Thought Society, the European Society for the History of Economic Thought, the History of Economic Thought Society of Australia and was also one of the founding members of the Society for the Greek Historians of Economic Thought. Apart from his scientific papers, he also contributed to the subject by serving as a referee to most specialist journals, as a participant to dozens of national and international conferences, as the author of numerous book reviews, and also as the author of many entries in specialized encyclopaedias and dictionaries.

Anastassios’ last major research endeavor was a book monograph (with Professor G. Bitros 2011b) which was published a few days before his death. In this work, Anastassios combined his deep knowledge of the history of economics and of the economic and social institutions of ancient Greece with his relatively recent interest in the role of institutions and social values. He was very enthusiastic about this research programme but also aware of its complicated and multi-dimensional nature.

I had the good fortune to be a close friend of Anastassios/‘Tassos’ – for the last 25 years. I always enjoyed his extremely good company and intellectually stimulating discussions, although there were plenty of issues where we did not agree, especially on the role of government intervention and regulation. He was always very keen to provide new insights and novel ideas on a wide range of controversial topics, with warmth and passion, as I am sure most colleagues who knew him will agree. I am also sure that the academic community, and especially the international community of the historians of economics, his co-authors, colleagues and friends, and his numerous students, will greatly miss him.

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