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Christopher Hookway, In Memoriam

CHRISTOPHER HOOKWAY, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sheffield, died on 21 October 2024 after a long illness. Prior to taking up a chair at Sheffield, he held it at Birmingham, where he taught from 1977 to 1995. His death has deeply moved many people who had personal contact with him, friends, disciples, colleagues, but has also been felt with grief by others who simply knew him through his publications and scholarly activity. The sad news of his death has had a special effect on many professors and former students of the former Department of Metaphysics and Theory of Knowledge of the University of Valencia, now integrated, as a teaching unit of the same title, in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Valencia. The authors of this obituary belong to this group. We had, over many years, a close relationship with him, which included, in addition to the intellectual and philosophical facet, an intimate bond of friendship and affection. We have therefore been particularly saddened by the loss of this kind, intelligent, generous, warm-hearted and humorous person, Chris Hookway.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Department of Philosophy at the Universitat de València would not have the spirit and quality it now has without Chris's influence, especially through his activity as tutor, in Birmingham and later in Sheffield, of several of those who were or are lecturers in the Department. Throughout his life, Chris always worked within the framework of Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy, and his influence on our Department has naturally had this imprint. In addition to the undersigned, other Valencian philosophers, such as Josep Corbí, José Miguel Esteban, David Carnicer and Sergi Rosell, also enjoyed his invaluable intellectual fellowship and tutelage. This broad and extensive collaboration with Valencian academic philosophy, and his invaluable contribution to the quality of teaching and research in the Philosophy degree, led to Professor Hookway being awarded the Gold Medal of the Faculty of Philosophy and Education. The granting of this award was promoted by several professors of the Faculty, friends and disciples of Chris,

gladly accepted by the academic authorities and managed in particular by Tobies Grimaltos, co-author of this obituary. This distinction was a sincere expression, on an institutional level, of the deep gratitude felt by his friends and disciples towards Professor Christopher Hookway.

Hookway was a recognised specialist in American pragmatism. His interest in this philosophical current, and especially in the work of Charles S. Peirce, was what, with a Fulbright scholarship, led him to devote, in the 1980s, an academic course at Harvard University, studying the work of this author. In 1985 he published *Peirce*, the first of an important series of publications on pragmatism. In fact, this current largely shaped his work and his way of doing and conceiving philosophy. A way of philosophising, however, that did not allow itself to be constrained either by fashions or by styles. Hookway's work has always oozed freedom of thought, originality and rigour. His books on Quine (*Quine*, 1988), mainly, and on scepticism (*Scepticism*, 1990) were milestones in his career and brought him international recognition. The book on Quine constituted a clear light in the understanding of the American philosopher's work. So valuable was the book in this respect that it merited a letter from the author himself in which he praised and discussed Hookway's interpretations of various aspects of Quine's work. In this letter, a sincere Quine, who sometimes complains that certain ideas or views are attributed to him, also says things like this: 'I read Part I with delight and admiration; I delight in your grasp and appreciation of my views, and admiration for your lucid exposition'. As for Quine's disagreements with Hookway, Putnam, upon learning of the letter in 2014, published a text entitled 'Hookway and Quine' (2015) in which he stated: '[I]n the letter Quine does not challenge Hookway's interpretation. Rather, he denies, on different grounds, that this interpretation applies to him. Not only is this disingenuous, but it suggests that it was not so much Hookway that Quine was trying to convince, but himself.'

On 21 October, not only did a good philosopher die, as these lines prove, but also a great person, to whom the Department of Philosophy of the University of Valencia owes a priceless debt.

The following are personal impressions of each of the three co-authors of this obituary.

This long and intense relationship between Chris and the Faculty of Philosophy of Valencia began in 1986, when I, Carlos Moya, obtained a grant from the Generalitat Valenciana for research stays in Spanish and foreign centres. The choice of Christopher Hookway, then lecturer at the University of Birmingham, as research tutor was due to the advice of Professor Tom Sorell, during a brief visit to our Department. In view of its results,

it was indeed a wonderful piece of advice. My first contact with Professor Hookway took place, one day in September 1986, in the foyer of the Faculty of Philosophy in Birmingham, to which I arrived practically drenched, in an epic downpour, which made me wonder whether I had been right to choose that city and that country as the destination of my stay. My memory of my stay, despite some somewhat difficult moments, due in part to the cultural difference and the distance from home, is undeniably positive. Chris helped me with the administrative formalities for my official existence at the university and in the city, as well as with finding accommodation. Lecturers in the small Philosophy Department at Birmingham such as Nick Dent, Barry Falk, and of course and most especially Chris himself, were not only kind but also warm and friendly to me, which, together with some friends I made and remember fondly, contributed greatly to my emotional well-being. After an initial period of lectures, seminars and other formative activities, Chris's insistence that I start writing philosophy was decisive for my philosophical work. The fruit of several months of work, and with Chris's invaluable critical assistance, was a manuscript (literally, as it was handwritten) on the philosophy of action which, after revision, and with his collaboration and editorial management, was accepted and published some three years later, in 1990, by Polity Press, Cambridge, under the title *The Philosophy of Action. An Introduction*. To my surprise, the book was widely circulated and accepted in various universities, especially in the English-speaking world. In fact, Donald Davidson himself wrote to me to tell me that he had assigned my book as necessary reading for his upcoming seminar on the philosophy of action. My second research stay took place during the academic year 2002-2003, again under the tutelage of Chris, who was now Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Sheffield. On this occasion I was accompanied by my wife, Milagro, and my youngest daughter, Ana. This time, the most outstanding fruit of my stay was the book *Moral Responsibility. The ways of scepticism*, which was published by Routledge in 2006. Once again I benefited from the help, advice and collaboration of Chris, to whom I will be deeply grateful for as long as I live. My time in Birmingham opened a path that was then followed by others. A few years after the academic year I spent in Sheffield, and after the series of research stays of other Valencian philosophers that followed mine, Chris made me, with his characteristic humour, a little confidence. He said, as I recall: 'When you and I first met, I didn't know what was starting'.

In 1990, invited by Carlos Moya, Hookway gave a PhD course at our faculty. In those days, I, Tobies Grimaltos, was also planning to do a research stay

at a British university. I saw in Chris the ideal person with whom to carry out this project. He seemed to me a kind, empathetic person, in a word, a good person, someone who would not leave me to my own devices and unattended. When I expressed my willingness, he advised me to make a first short stay to improve my poor English a bit. I did not obey him. The following year, I recklessly applied for a scholarship from the MEC and, with my family, we went to Birmingham.

From the very first moment he was excellent to me, very generous; he accompanied me to look for accommodation and even left me some bedding and a raincoat. We met every Friday from five to six. Occasionally I also bothered him outside these hours, and he never protested or made a face if this happened. I saw him offering me so much for nothing that I had a dilemma. It didn't seem right that he would give me so much of his time and I wouldn't reciprocate in some way. However, the only thing I could offer in return was that we would collaborate in writing an article on the subject on which I had gone to work, on which I had written some initial ideas that I had sent him before I went and which he had found interesting. It was he, in fact, who proposed to me to continue working on it. And here came the tricky horn of the dilemma: who was I to dare to propose this to him? He was already someone who enjoyed international recognition. But who was I?

Finally, I plucked up the courage and suggested it to him. I did not yet know Chris Hookway's great humility and honesty. So I was thrilled by his response. 'We can try,' he said. Before our Friday meeting, I would hand him what I had written during the week. He would discard some of my ideas, encourage me to develop others, point me in the right direction, or point me to a pending question. He would suggest that I read texts that could help me and that would provide me with the conceptual tools I needed to approach more precisely what was occupying me. I will always remember those intellectually stimulating sessions, his generosity, his rigour and the speed of his intelligence, always ready to find problematic aspects and raise objections. In Birmingham, and thanks to Hookway, I learned to work in a more rigorous and demanding way than I was used to. I learned to pursue ideas to the end, not to shy away from problems, and to face possible objections without making concessions to fear or laziness.

The end result was an article that we later published in *Ratio* under the title 'When Deduction leads to Belief'. The final version came from his hand, obviously. I remember when he handed it to me: 'Would you put your name on it? And I, who don't know what I would have given to get published with him, said, full of emotion: 'But your name has to go first'. And showing his generous honesty, he replied: 'No, the names of the authors have to go in alphabetical order'. The teacher became a friend, without my ceasing to consider him a teacher. And this friendship lasted for many years.

Chris was not only a generous and inspiring figure for his colleagues and friends, but also for any undergraduate or postgraduate student who had the chance to interact with him. As an undergraduate Erasmus student, I, Jordi Valor, currently a member of the Philosophy Department at the University of Valencia, met Chris Hookway during his last academic year at the University of Birmingham (1994-95), where he was for several years Head of the Philosophy Department. At a moment in which the Erasmus programme was not as popular and well established as it is nowadays, Chris took pains in order to make sure that all the academic and administrative issues related to the four mobility students visiting Birmingham from Valencia were properly addressed and sorted out. His undergraduate course on American Pragmatism —where he taught about the views and internal debates on the nature of truth, belief, inquire or experience held by C. S. Peirce, W. James or J. Dewey— was very popular among Birmingham students, and the only course which unanimously attracted the interest of all Erasmus students that academic year. In 2000, some years later and being already a PhD student at the University of Valencia, I visited the University of Sheffield as an external postgraduate student under Chris's supervision, and, once again, I had the chance to realise that Chris was far more than a prominent academic philosopher and a competent supervisor. From the very beginning, and as it happened in the past, he helped me to deal with all the academic and administrative issues related to my stay in Sheffield and offered me very helpful advices and supervision on my doctoral research. But he did a lot more. Chris and his wife, Jo Hookway, generously opened the doors of their house to me, and not only offered me a place to stay while I was looking for accommodation (as they had done with so many colleagues and postgraduate students before), but also made sure that I could settle in well within Sheffield's community of postgraduate philosophy students. They both genuinely cared about my well-being and about my possibilities to have a fruitful experience in Sheffield both at a personal and at an academic level. That was characteristic of Chris, philosophy was not just a job, but a pleasure, and one which did not have to exclude other dimensions of life that make it worthwhile. His colleagues and students were first and foremost partners in a shared journey in which everyone has always something to offer to others and something to learn from them. And those of us who have made that journey with him have inevitably become his friends.

Chris Hookway has exerted a great and lasting influence on many lecturers and philosophy students from the University of Valencia. He has influenced most certainly those of us who greatly benefitted from attending his lectures on pragmatism and other topics; or who had the chance to work with

him on a paper; or to comment with him our work or his own work. However, Chris also had a great influence on those students who, thanks to the Erasmus exchange programmes that he helped to start (first with the University of Birmingham and later on with the University of Sheffield), had the chance through more than three decades to become acquainted with other academic environments and practices. Many of us discovered in those academic environments the close connections existing between writing an essay and being part of a conversation where all parties try to delimit a philosophically relevant problem and work out possible solutions by exchanging intuitions, reasons and arguments that our discussants can critically weigh and evaluate. Those attitudes also shaped our relationship with Chris. Whenever we talked to him we always felt that we were part of a conversation where we were properly listened to, where our views were taken seriously and our interlocutor was always ready to change his mind, to learn from them and make room for us in his life.