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David Roland Doublet

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Bond University

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David Roland Doublet

Abstract
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OBITUARY

DAVID ROLAND DOUBLET

Professor David Doublet

Editor's Note

It is with great sadness that we report the untimely death of our friend and colleague Professor David Doublet of the Faculty of Law, University of Bergen, Norway.

David first visited us three years ago and has since been Visiting Professor. He taught Government, Politics and the Law in August and died on his return to Bergen.

We shall miss him. We valued his intellect and originality and the air of irreverent fun which he exuded. We include in this issue of the law review the following tribute by Professor Jim Corkery which incorporates one by Assistant Professor Terry Gygar. Jim visited Bergen a number of times and Terry took David's last course. I discussed with David his plans for a new book on Globalisation, a topic of common interest. Suffice it to say that we shall be the poorer for the fact that he never completed it. It was to have been a most original work which needed to be written.

John Farrar
Editor

David Roland Doublet, Professor of Law at the University of Bergen, Norway, and Visiting Professor at Bond University, died of a heart attack early on the morning of 15 August 2000. He was 46.

David had been a visitor at the Bond Law School on three occasions in the last three years. In July and August 2000, he was Visiting Professor at Bond and

offered a course for undergraduate and postgraduate students on 'Government, Politics and the Law'. In his three years of contact with the Bond Law School, David Doublet made a significant contribution to Bond University as a teacher and scholar. He was also the initiator and driving force behind the formal links established between the Bond and Bergen law schools.

Doublet was a gifted scholar and a well regarded teacher. He had charisma. With his long, unkempt fair hair, which was a source of pride, his large frame, his relaxed dress code, his gregarious nature and his passionate style, David Doublet was the most recognisable and one of the best known legal academics in Scandinavia. To his colleagues and students in Australia, he was, in appearance at least, a reincarnation of his Nordic ancestors.

We enjoyed his unique combination of fine cooking, good drinking, rock music and robust debate. His culinary flair was genuine. His French-born father, also an academic, was a fine cook – chef, more like. He passed on this skill to David. The father told the son, with whom he often clashed (at one time they would not even speak if they encountered each other in the street), 'You will probably do nothing in life, but at least you will do this one thing right - you will eat good meats'. David indeed learned to cook meats, and other dishes, superbly; but the father was wrong about his son achieving nothing in life. Doublet worked hard, very hard, and he achieved a generous lifetime's work in his 46 years. Driven to achieve, he found it almost impossible to reduce his pace.

Two doctorates

Doublet defended his first doctorate at the University of Bergen in 1986. It was in philosophy. The topic was *Reason as a Tribunal*. The thesis was translated into German under the title *Die Vernunft als Rechtsinstanz. Die Kritik der reinen Vernuft als Reflexeionsprozess der Vernunft*. Then, in 1995, in a crowning achievement, he completed a second doctorate, this one in law. It was entitled *Law, Science and Reason.* The second project started on impulse, but it soon became serious, Doublet told *Bergen's Tidende* in 1995. The thesis – another Herculean effort - also became a book. In it Doublet constructed what he called 'a theoretical defence of the welfare state'. When David completed the book, he magnanimously dedicated it – the fruit of several years unremitting endeavour in European traditions of scholarship - to his father, who had always wanted to complete a doctorate of his own.

His philosophy of law[1]

In Norway, David Doublet was a senior member of the Bergen law faculty. He was a major innovator. He was intellectually curious and a person of enthusiasms. He constantly posed critical questions and offered an open mind and vigorous debate.

In his writings, he challenged old opinion on the theory of law. He introduced new theories of the relationship between the law and the society. Doublet was one of the brightest Norwegian legal scholars of his generation. He early in his career displayed high competence. Comments Professor Jan Fridtjof Bernt, Doublet's colleague and co-author of their textbook on Jurisprudence:

> David was … unique… I do not know any present – young or old – Norwegian legal scholar who can match his combination of vast knowledge, a keen intellect, a highly developed critical sense and a combination of persistence in exploring new avenues of thought and ability to adjust his conclusions and direction of research in response to his findings on the way. But we will find that he has shaped the legal mind of some of the most gifted among the next generation of scholars.

Doublet's inquiries went to the foundations of law and its effectiveness in the state. Traversing Europe's 20th century experience, he challenged central precepts of the relationship between the arms of government – the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. Doublet's scholarship greatly impressed Professor Terry Gygar of the Bond law school:

> David radiated an intense interest in the processes, structures and forms of government in a democratic society. His particular passion was a review of the interplay between government, the courts, the legal profession and the notion of justice in a modern democracy. David introduced his students to the richness and variety of European jurisprudential thought which had analysed these issues, particularly in relation to the constitutional roles and limitations of governments and courts. His erudition and passion gave clear evidence of the depth of European thought regarding these issues which had been prompted by the need to re-establish national constitutions and democratic governments in the aftermath of World War II .

Active in politics

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1 I am grateful to Jan Fridthjof Bernt and Line Ravlo for insights on David Doublet's contribution to legal scholarship. Thanks to scholarship winner Haakon Skimmeland, who translated articles from the Norwegian press. My thanks also to John Lessing for his recollections on Doublet's musical tastes. John and David enjoyed their common interest in rock music.

Doublet's research, writing and lecturing did not see him tucked safely away in academia. He also became involved in politics. He was the leader of the Labor Party's University group in Bergen. His intelligence and forthrightness made him a well-respected figure, and he was touted as a potential minister of education. He was European in his allegiances. In 1998, Doublet roundly criticised the NATO bombing of Serbia. 'It is a scandal that NATO and the USA pulverised Serbia in order to secure human rights. I do not buy the argument that if we sacrifice some people now, we will save many more lives later on', Doublet said to the *Bergen's Tidende* in October 1998.

Internationalist

Doublet gave much of himself as a highly appreciated lecturer, mentor and administrator. He energetically pursued international ties for his university. He founded and then nurtured the relationship between the Bergen and Bond law schools. He was planning with enthusiasm for the next stages of collaboration between the schools on programs and writing. He planned to publish his next book in English, specifically to cater for his Australian course. His death was lamented in the Norwegian press, which highlighted his importance as a teacher and scholar in Scandinavia.

In the Bergen law faculty

Doublet had become one of the senior academic administrators in the Bergen Faculty. He was in charge of the faculty's PhD program and he felt a particular responsibility for the doctoral candidates. He made great efforts to develop a program for tutorials and in supervising candidates.

He was a central participant in decisions on administrative and academic questions in the School. He was a catalyst for change, primed with his overseas experience and inspiration. His last project was a new system for an integrated first semester in the School, using small group tutorials and continuous assessment of students, rather than relying on just the one final examination.

He was hardworking and generous towards his colleagues with his time and knowledge. He could be inspirational. Although he had no time for the demands of political correctness, he enjoyed the shifts and interplay of faculty politics. He relished his involvement in clever policies, successful programs and innovations. The Bergen faculty will feel a deep loss, because he was capable of formulating and carrying forward enlightened policies, in the same way that he founded and nurtured the relationship with Bond University. Such skills and flair are rare.

Music

Doublet was passionate about music. Not all music. There was little appeal for him in the sanitised tunes of popular culture or even in flowing baroque melodies. He was a rock fan. He depended on his music for relaxation and for the insights of the more poetic lyrics, as well as for the stimulation of the strong beat and drive. In the foreword to one of his books, he thanked the hippie John Sebastian and the rock band The Kinks for, 'making the music I comforted myself with on rainy days'. Visitors to his home would be treated to a running selection of his favourite rock songs, from Jimi Hendrix to Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, and beyond that to modern alternative rock bands, such as the Pixies and the Throwing Musers. A frequent gift from him when coming for dinner was a rock CD, which he shared as freely as he did his intellectual insights and knowledge.

A full life

But a month before his untimely death, David visited a doctor in Australia, worried about the after effects of a recent bout of influenza. He had pain in his arms and was short of breath. The doctor, upon taking David's booming blood pressure and hearing that his formidable patient loved red meats, smoked cigarettes and was partial to an evening ale, sent him for a checkup at a local hospital. With the frightening wires and monitors strapped to his chest, David performed surprisingly well on the running machine. The encouraging heart results pleased him mightily. 'High blood pressure, we can work on', he maintained. 'But I would not care to give up life's necessities, if my heart was the problem.' His restless energy would have made a life of physical or mental decline intolerable for him, if the heart attack had left him incapacitated.

Friend, husband and father

David Doublet was able to get close to people and was a loyal friend. He was an interesting conversationalist, and unusually capable of traversing a range of subjects with authority and passion, whether in Norwegian, French, German or English. His interest in people and his abundant good humour, combined with his intelligence, made him a pivot in his circle of friends.

David married his high school sweetheart, Karen. They forged a fine partnership; she a meteorologist and he a legal academic. They had three children. David was an attentive parent. He thought much about his children's welfare and his role as a father, anxious that his workaholic ways would not harm them. He need not have worried. He involved them in his frequent travels. His family accompanied him to Australia on two of his three visits, and they lived cheerfully in a high rise apartment overlooking the sea at Burleigh. He was the source of the energetic buzz, the occasionally irreverent fun and the big hearted humour in the family. With his family, too, he was a legend in the

making, and he crammed a decade into every five years of living. He is survived by Karen, and his three children, Daniel (20), Rosa (13) and Katharina (9).

In honour of David Doublet's life and work, the scholarship granted to a Bergen student each year to attend Bond University is named *The David Doublet Scholarship in Law*. It would be appropriate to present the scholarship along with a CD of rock music, a pack of naturally-brewed ale, and the transcript of one of his finest lectures.

Jim Corkery