

ENGLISH

TRIBUTE TO RENATO DI RUZZA

5th February 2025

I was asked to speak on behalf of the ergological community. All the messages of condolence from this community wished, first and foremost, to be addressed to Renato's family, especially to Colette and Andrea. The list of these messages is impressive; one can feel a tension, an emotion that grips the heart.

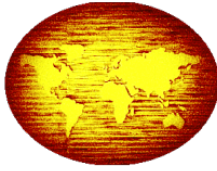
All of them evoke the unique quality of the man—so demanding and rigorous, yet at the same time, such a pedagogical teacher in difficult subjects, always available and inspiring as a thesis and dissertation advisor, a committed citizen, loyal to his ethical and political principles from which nothing could swing him away. A combination of traits not so easily compatible, yet which he never ceased to embody, with his own genius, as reflected in these messages, both sorrowful and full of praise. I have often pondered this compatibility, and I believe it is necessary to look back at his heritage.

Once, he told me that he had spent his childhood as part of an Italian immigrant family in the outskirts of Vitry-sur-Seine. For me, a Parisian at the time, such living conditions were almost unimaginable. Through what efforts, what sacrifices, what incredible self-discipline did this son of an immigrant, after "heroic" studies, manage to integrate into the Grenoble School of Regulation, join the team of the great Gérard de Bernis, and achieve the most challenging university title, the Agrégation in Economic Sciences?

For that, I hold him in high esteem and admiration, which none of our few disagreements could ever diminish. Renato was a living challenge—one he never betrayed throughout his life.

This fidelity to his heritage, I believe, explains the dual dimension of the qualities he demonstrated in his professional life.

On the one hand, his deep conviction, sometimes quite rigid, that acquiring the knowledge requires self-discipline, epistemological rigor, and therefore, respect for the professorial function. In his view, these traits were necessary to legitimize the title of university professor, as he had heroically experienced it. Beyond that, it led him to respect rules, ethical codes, and principles through which social and political institutions can validate genuinely democratic virtues.



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On the other hand, his proletarian heritage instilled in him an unyielding will to fight against exploitation, subordination, and oppression. On one side, respect for formal egalitarian norms in universities and beyond; on the other, the struggle to subvert all forms of domination—far from absent in academia.

And it was precisely this paradoxical combination that the ergological approach required.

At the time, it was a struggle to overcome the great difficulties of institutionalizing ergology in the public French university system. Nonetheless, it was based on the philosophical and epistemological foundations that strongly challenged dominant trends.

Renato understood this well when, in 1997, breaking with disciplinary conventions, he left his position as professor at Marne-la-Vallée to join our team and, in 1998, co-found the Department of Ergology at the University of Provence.

It was then necessary to manage this Department—of which he quickly became director—, oversee its national degrees (DESS, Master's), establish the International Society of Ergology (in 2010) on a legal basis, organize its Congresses and Journal, ensuring that no one could question its adherence to formal requirements. But never losing sight of the fact that this conformity had to serve the social expansion of knowledge interlocutors: workers, labor unions, and all those mistreated by financial power; that, he was able to accomplish—with his genius.

The ergological approach owes him much, and I am not sure we could have succeeded without him.

His presence is indelible. Renato's absent is inconceivable.

Yves Schwartz