Obituary of Professor Paul Diesing

Paul Diesing, philosopher, died on May 1, 2011 of the complications of dementia, in Bradenton, FL. He was 88.

Dr. Diesing's life work in philosophy was the study of all the social sciences. He studied them by being an active participant—as a philosopher, a political scientist, a sociologist, an economist, a psychologist, and an anthropologist. His interests were broad and far-reaching, but they carried him on a clear and consistent path, investigating the role of rationality, methodology, and ideology in social science research. He published six influential books and numerous articles on a wide range of topics.

Paul Diesing was born on September 3rd, 1922 in Elgin, Illinois. He attended Concordia Teachers College, where he studied music and philosophy, and then the University of Chicago, where he studied composition with Leo Sowerby and Remi Gassman, and flute with Ernest Liegl of the Chicago Symphony. He served in the US Army from 1943-1946, when he was sent to Yale and the University of Michigan to study Japanese.

Following his army service, Dr. Diesing returned to the University of Chicago to study philosophy, sociology, and economics. Working with anthropologist Robert Redfield within the framework of John Dewey's philosophy, he produced a dissertation "An action program for the Fox Indians" in 1952. He also met his wife-to-be, Eleanor Zuckman, in a sociology class in 1947.

From 1952 to 1962, Dr. Diesing taught philosophy at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. The following year was spent at the University of Colorado, Boulder. For the rest of his career he taught at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he was initially appointed in the Department of Philosophy, and then in the Department of Political Science. He was also affiliated with the SUNY-Buffalo Center for International Conflict Studies, and was the campus delegate to the AFT.

In addition to his academic career, Dr. Diesing was an avid amateur musician all his life. He played the flute from boyhood, his playing distinguished by its effortlessly sweet tone. But early in his marriage he and Eleanor discovered the string quartet—he took up the viola and she the cello. Nearly sixty years of weekly sessions running the gamut of the quartet literature ensued. Paul and Eleanor also played together in community orchestras, both in Buffalo (the Amherst Symphony) and in the Bradenton area (Anna Maria Island Concert Chorus and Orchestra). He continued to play throughout his life, even as dementia took its toll.

Dr. Diesing is survived by his wife of 62 years, Eleanor; two sons, Richard Diesing, of Clermont, FL, and Max Diesing, of Prague, Czech Republic and two daughters, Molly Diesing, of Ithaca, NY, and Sarah DesJardins, of Ann Arbor, MI, and five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.