

*Words of Thanks*

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Thank you very much, Stephan, for the kind introduction.

I would first like to thank my family;

- my parents Margreth and Fritz, who always believed I could do it, for their unwavering support;
- my wife Barbara, who had and has to sacrifice so much for my dream of making a living in philosophy, for her love;
- and my daughters Ava and Lana, who mean everything to me, for making sure I don't get stuck just too much in my philosophical dreams.

As is appropriate on the present occasion, I also thank Henri Lauener, not just for bequeathing this Prize, but also for the seminal role he played early on in my professional formation.

It was in his seminars—they were all either on Kant or on Quine, at least in my memory—it was in his seminars that I learned—had to learn—to properly analyze a philosophical text (identify the main thesis, reconstruct the argument, identify subsidiary theses, etc).

I say "had to learn" because in his seminars, you better did a good job presenting the text you were assigned, for whoever did not was ineluctably exposed by him, and by the other participants in the seminar. I mean to say this as something positive, for I deeply admired his invariable intellectual honesty, which was second to no one else's. But boy, I have to tell you, it was scary when I—an undergraduate at the time with a non-philosophy major—had to present material from Kant's first Critique in an advanced seminar with just him and a small group of his very best students. You just couldn't hide.

But apart from the philosophical acumen we had to develop and the textual scrutiny, which we came to apply routinely, I also learned that other very important lesson: as brutally honest and as intellectually challenging his criticism never failed to be, it was never personal. Even if he just wrestled you, as it were, into the philosophical dust, you were assured his respect—provided that you dirt off your shoulders, get up, and come back the next time, trying harder.

I owe Henri Lauener a lot, and wouldn't be who I am now, if it weren't for his mentorship and—I like to think—his philosophical friendship.

On a more personal note, I was one of his very last students, taking my final exam with him in his final year before retirement. At the time, I also wrote—co-authored with three other of his last students, two of them previous prizewinners—what I count today as my very first publication: an essay about Lauener's philosophical legacy, published in a German journal on the occasion of his retirement.

The next four years were his final years, with me—sometimes alone, sometimes with others—visiting him in various hospitals and institutions in Bern and Erlach, where he stayed, necessitated by his debilitating chronic illness. I helped him edit his last essay, and he helped me write and edit his own letter of recommendation for me...

I am eternally grateful for everything he taught me. And I am grateful to the Foundation Council for awarding the Prize to me and for giving me this opportunity today to publicly express my gratitude to Henri Lauener.

Thank you very much indeed.