

MEMORIES OF PROFESSOR ATHANASSIOS YIANNOPOULOS

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My relationship with Professor Yiannopoulos is long-standing.¹ I took the first course that he taught at LSU Law School in 1962. Before teaching that course, Professor Yiannopoulos was a research professor. Then, Dean Paul Hebert, with his usual knack for recognizing talent, would hire research professors, and if they proved their potential, would add them to the faculty when circumstances permitted. He hired Professor Yiannopoulos as a research professor after he earned a degree at Berkeley. Of course, Professor Yiannopoulos was added to the tenure-track faculty and proved his potential to a degree that no one could foresee.

Professor Yiannopoulos's first course was Jurisprudence. I believe many students took the course because it was one of the required electives. Their interest was in learning what would help in practicing law, not issues raised by Jurisprudence. There was, however, a group of students, including myself, who were interested in the subject matter—we asked questions, even challenged opinions expressed in the readings. Professor Yiannopoulos liked this for two reasons: first, it kept the class lively, as opposed to a strict lecture class; and second, it identified a group of students who were genuinely interested in the subject matter.

Professor Yiannopoulos always greeted members of the group and asked how we were when we saw him in a restaurant or other venue. In addition, he would devote time to discuss issues raised in the course with members of the group at any time. In that era, few students had that kind of experience with faculty (relationships between students and faculty were more

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1. In this essay, I will sometimes use Professor Yiannopoulos's common nickname, Thanassi, which everyone who knew him used, and on other occasions, I will use the more formal Professor Yiannopoulos, depending on the context.

formal at that time). Naturally, the members of the group felt gratitude to Professor Yiannopoulos, as well as an admiration that at times merged into affection toward him. My experience in this class is my first memory of Professor Yiannopoulos—a pleasant one.

Professor Yiannopoulos maintained this attitude toward students throughout his teaching career, both at LSU Law School and at Tulane University Law School. He literally had an open door policy at his office and would devote time to any student who showed an interest in one of his subjects. This was all the more remarkable because of the time he devoted to his prodigious output of publications and invited lectures. I believe he genuinely enjoyed discussing issues with students—the hallmark of a true teacher.

Some years went by before my next encounter with Professor Yiannopoulos. I moved to Washington, D.C., after receiving a scholarship to earn a Master's Degree at George Washington University Law School. I passed the Maryland Bar Exam and engaged in a variety of legal practices in the Washington area. I considered living in D.C., but something was missing. When I attended LSU Law School, all students were required to take all Civil Code subjects. I had eighteen hours of Civil Code studies that I would never use if I remained in D.C. The Code called.

I applied to Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and was fortunate that they hired me as an Assistant Professor in 1969. I was assigned to teach Civil Law Property and Louisiana Security Rights. The Civil Law Property section on "Things" in the unrevised Civil Code of 1870 was almost completely altered by statutes. Not having studied Civil Law Property for many years, I was unaware of this. I was teaching the Code articles as living law but ignoring the statutory changes. Naturally, the students kept pointing out experiences that I could not square with the written Code articles.

This situation resulted in my first encounter with Thanassi since returning to Louisiana—one for which I am extremely grateful, as it literally saved my Civil Law Property course. I read Professor Yiannopoulos's first in a line of treatises on Louisiana Property Law—it carefully explained how the Louisiana Legislature had changed the Code articles in this area by subsequent legislation, which was not part of the Code. I was then able to explain to my students why the Code articles did not represent the current law. Not to exaggerate, but I felt somewhat

as Alexander Pope did when he wrote, "Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in the night: God said, Let Newton be! And all was Light."

Soon after I began teaching at Loyola, Professor Yiannopoulos's generosity led to a personal encounter with him. I do not know whether he remembered me as a student at LSU, but when he learned that I was teaching Civil Law Property at Loyola, he invited me to serve on the Louisiana Law Institute's Committee for the Revision of the Articles on Property, of which he was the Reporter. Thus, I served almost from the inception of the Committee. This experience was richly rewarding. I had the opportunity to observe the development of Louisiana Property Law under the expert and watchful eye of Professor Yiannopoulos. Of equal importance to me, this experience eventually led to a close friendship and many pleasant collaborations and memories.

One of my most memorable collaborations occurred when I suggested that Professor Yiannopoulos join the Societe Internationale pour l'Histoire de Droits de l'Antiquite (SIDHA), one of the oldest learned societies in Europe, comprising the finest Roman law scholars in Europe and other jurisdictions that have adopted civil codes. I knew that he had a European legal education, which requires a large number of courses in Roman law. Naturally, as always, Thanassi made an immediate impression on the group at the first conference he attended in 1992. He eventually developed many lasting friendships among the members and was honored with a eulogy at the first conference following his death.

On the flight home after his first conference, Thanassi suggested that the Tulane and Loyola law schools offer to hold the conference in New Orleans. At the next conference in 1993, Thanassi addressed the group and made the offer to hold the conference in New Orleans. I deferred to him to make the offer because of his commanding presence and reputation. A wise choice. The group accepted the offer and scheduled the conference for 1995.

We succeeded in holding the group's only conference in the United States in 1995, hosted jointly by Loyola and Tulane law schools. Thanassi generously offered Tulane's facilities for the conference, which was significant in making the conference a success. As it turned out, Thanassi had scheduled a conference at Tulane Law School that immediately followed the SIDHA conference. He invited all SIDHA attendees to attend as non-

paying guests. The group was impressed, and some of the older members still reminisce with me about their experience in New Orleans.

Following the New Orleans conference, Thanassi and I attended conferences in Sardinia, Sicily, Southern Italy, and many other interesting venues, including Kavala and Philippi, a resort area in Greece with nearby Roman ruins, close to Thessaloniki, where he was born. We spent some pleasant hours on beaches at some of these venues—discussing law of course. The cementing of a friendship.

These are a few of my fondest memories of Professor Yiannopoulos, whom I considered one of my best friends as well as a mentor. How would I describe my friend? Five words or phrases best describe my remembrance of him: ebullient (if sometimes loud), generous, open to disagreements with his views, learned, and, of course, indefatigable in his work. These are characteristics that most people appreciate, which is why Thanassi had so many, many friends. I shall miss him greatly. The Civil Law in Louisiana and many other civil law jurisdictions throughout the world will miss his contributions to their development. Many people in Louisiana do not realize how widely known and respected he was. Most in the legal profession do realize, however, how fortunate we were that he lived and worked in Louisiana.