
IN MEMORIAM

SHMUEL NOAH EISENSTADT
(SEPTEMBER 10, 1923 – SEPTEMBER 2, 2010)

Gad Yair

Professor Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt passed away September 2, 2010. Prof. Eisenstadt was the Rose Isaacs Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he served as a faculty member since 1946. He was chair of the Department of Sociology for 20 years (1949–1969), Dean of the Social Science Faculty (1966–1969), and served in many Hebrew University roles and duties until his retirement in 1983. He is the founder of Israeli sociology and the most prolific sociologist in Israel – having authored dozens of books and hundreds of papers. His name – and his studies – are well known throughout the academic world, and his academic prestige was echoed in appreciation in non-academic forums as well. He was active in advising governmental offices and think tanks, and served as a facilitator for many important intellectual coalitions.

Prof. Eisenstadt was jokingly called by his younger colleagues here as ‘the living incarnation of Max Weber’. Like the great German master of historical sociology, Eisenstadt tackled the problems of modernity and historical diversity. He crystallized our understanding of the origins of modernity and the Axial Age, and developed a productive line of scholarship around his idea of ‘multiple modernities’. He was interested in traditions and their constant re-interpretations; in collective identities and the transformations of states; in globalization and primordiality. He was always on top of every field he dwelled in, and was updated about forthcoming books well ahead of libraries.

During his long career, Prof. Eisenstadt was a great ambassador of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He served as a visiting professor at numerous universities, including Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Chicago, Michigan, Washington, Oslo, Zurich, Vienna, and Hong Kong. He was a Fellow at the Center of Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences and the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies. As of 1967, Prof. Eisenstadt was a Senior Research Fellow at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem.

Prof. Eisenstadt had many colleagues worldwide, and he was invited to sit in the most prestigious academies and associations. Prof. Eisenstadt was a member of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Foreign Honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Foreign Member of the American Philosophical Society, Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, Honorary Foreign Research Fellow at the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Honorary Fellow of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

Prof. Eisenstadt is recipient of honorary doctoral degree in Political Science from the University of Helsinki; Doctor of Law, *honoris causa* of the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Institute of Religion; honorary doctorate, Duke University; Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, Harvard University; honorary doctoral degree of Tel Aviv University; Honorary Doctor, Central European University, Budapest; and Honorary Doctor, University of Warsaw.

Prof. Eisenstadt is also recipient of many awards, among them the International Balzan Prize in Sociology; the McIver award of the American Sociological Association; Amalfi Prize for Sociology and Social Sciences; the Israel Prize and the Rotshchild Prize in Social Sciences; Max Planck Research Award; Ambassador of Cultural Dialogue Award; Polish Asia Pacific Council, Warsaw; EMET Foundation Prize in Sociology; and most recently of The Holberg International Memorial Prize.

Prof. Eisenstadt was a great teacher and his many students remember him with awe. He commanded many languages and was an astounding fast reader and a penetrative listener. He had an astounding memory – straddling across wide literatures in history, anthropology, law, political science, anthropology and even economics. His sense of humor and self-cynicism were unique and he never failed to enjoy a good meal peppered with intellectual discussions. He supported many young scholars on their careers, opening up his immense home library to those who could not find what they needed elsewhere. He advised and encouraged Israeli doctoral students to travel abroad, and supported their applications to top universities worldwide.

Prof. Eisenstadt was active and in full capacity to his last day. Two weeks ago, upon my last visit to his house, he was sitting to his table, writing, as always. As he told me, ‘if you get used to work, you can never quit’. He never did, indeed. Just two weeks before his death he was happy to see two new books published. And only two days ago he asked me whether he should write a recommendation letter for a candidate to our department in Hebrew or English. SN often joked about his death. He maintained that spirit to his very last words to his family this morning. This is a good way to remember him: An Intellectual giant with a human friendly smile.