

In memoriam
European Prize for Social Science and Sociology
“Premio Amalfi”
June, 2010

Juan José Linz
Laudatio

SALVADOR GINER

For the Scientific Committee

Professor Carlo Mongadini, Chairman of the Scientific Committee,
Distinguished Members of the Scientific Committee of the European Prize for Social Science
and Sociology,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a privilege to have been asked by the President and the Committee of the Amalfi Prize to speak before you about the work and contributions to knowledge made by the social scientist who has been awarded this year's prize, Professor Juan José Linz Storch de Gracia. I imagine that the fact that, for the first time, the Prize is awarded to a fellow-countryman of mine has prompted the Committee to ask me to pronounce the *laudatio*.

Unfortunately Professor Juan Linz has been unable to join us here today, as he is about to undergo a kidney operation. He has written our Chairman thanking us for the decision to award him the Prize and explaining the cause of his absence. We know that both he and his wife, Rocío Terán, very much regret this case of *force majeure*, and we wish him a successful and quick recovery from the surgical intervention.

Juan Linz had a German father and was born in Bonn in the year of 1926. He attended secondary school during the last two years of Civil War, in the city of Salamanca, and afterwards in Madrid until 1943, at a justly famous school, the Ramiro de Maeztu High School. He studied Law and Political and Economic Science, at Madrid University, where he received his degree with special honours. A disciple of professor Javier Conde, a distinguished political philosopher, he obtained a scholarship to study at Columbia University. He studied sociology there, under professor Seymour Martin Lipset, and obtained his PhD degree in 1959, with his dissertation on *The Social Basis of Political Parties in West Germany*.

All of you must have read Lipset's *Political Man*, a classic in political science. You may have been surprised, as I once was, by the repeated references to an unpublished PhD dissertation by a certain Juan Linz. He, and soon many others, became aware of Linz' first

outstanding contribution to our knowledge of the sociology of political parties and the functioning of democracy.

He soon turned his attention to what he would call ‘authoritarian regimes’, then a much neglected field in political science and sociology, where, understandably, either democracy or totalitarianism — fascist, communist, or otherwise— held everyone’s attention. Yet, Juan Linz realized that a great number of dictatorships did not fit these two extreme cases. Looking at his own country, Spain, Linz soon began to analyze the Franco dictatorship with the same undogmatic, thorough and systematic scholarship with which he had earlier looked at the Weimar Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. His 1964 paper *An Authoritarian Regime: Spain* formulated the later widely used notion of “authoritarian regime”, especially in his paper of 1975 *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, a now a *locus classicus* in the political science literature. It is a major effort to develop a taxonomy of non democratic regimes in the world, with wide empirical implications for research. It stimulated research and elicited a substantial response even among those, like myself, who at one point or another respectfully disagreed with some aspects of his own conceptualization.

In my opinion that contribution would have been sufficient for an award like the one we are bestowing upon Professor Linz today. Much more was to come. Juan Linz soon became a world authority in the study of political transitions from democracy to dictatorship in studies such as can be found in the 1978 volume *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, whose focus on the incompetence of political elites rather than in notions such as that of “class struggle” or on the allegedly anonymous forces of history would soon irritate the more Marxist or *marxistisant* observers of the process in question. (If I may allow a personal view on the matter, Linz’ idea seems to stem from a very Spanish conception of power, where the focus on the will and moral character of leaders had already been developed by our classical political philosophers, such as Mariana and Gracián.) A series of important studies then followed, as “part of his prodigious output, such as *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, in 1994, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* in 1996. Working with other political scientists, such as Stein Rokkan, he also studied the processes on nation building and on the role of states as the origin, not just the result, of nations themselves.

I will spare you the titles of a number of extraordinarily detailed studies about the political structure of his own country, Spain, especially about her vastly interesting and relatively peaceful transition to democracy, about nationalism in the Basque country, regionalism, party politics, and social structure, often in close association with Spanish sociologists.

Besides his outstanding theoretical contributions to the study of dictatorship, democracy and to political transitions in several parts of the world, Juan Linz has also contributed with some historical works in the history of ideas which remain important to our day: I will only mention his comprehensive study of Roberto Michels’ political sociology in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* —translated into the Italian edition of *Il partito politico*— or his masterful study of the decline and enormous difficulties encountered by natural science and scholarship in XVIIth Century Spain’. The latter is an outstanding piece in the sociology of science that sociologists often overlook, guided as they often are, by the notion of progress to the detriment and neglect of the the study of the reverse phenomenon, the decline of science or the difficulties encountered for scientific advancement in a given society.

At an early stage Professor Juan Linz obtained a Chair in Political Science at Yale and has remained there ever since, with constant academic visits to areas in Europe and Spanish America. He has constantly been present in Spain, in an strenuous effort to participate in its life, letters and, also in its democratic politics, though certainly not as a member of any political party. He is the doyen of Spanish sociologists. Among his many international awards and doctorates *honoris causa*, he has received one of the highest prizes given by his country, the Prince of Asturias Prize, in 1987. I was very fortunate to be on the awarding board of that Prize and had the opportunity to write about his work on that occasion, now quite a few years back. His Chair at Yale became a place of pilgrimage for many Iberians and Iberian Americans who learned only from his courses but very especially from his infinite patience and generosity while supervising dissertations, suggesting lines of research or assessing work in progress. Several scholars and students, notably from Italy and Germany, as well as from the United States, came also to Yale to converse with him, to study under him or simply to attend his legendary never-ending lectures.

Again I was lucky that I witnessed the “Linz phenomenon” if I’m allowed to use the expression, at first hand. I enjoyed a sabbatical year in 1981 from my University in London and, by sheer chance, my family and myself were generously lent a house in a village very near New Haven. Professor Linz then gave me all the facilities at Yale, including a study, as if I had been appointed a visiting professor. I am not one of his direct disciples, and my own views and work orientations do not always coincide: yet I am as much a Linzian as anyone who is not his disciple can be. I wish to thank him and his wife Rocío for an unforgettable year and for the many, many hours spent in their charming company.

I cannot hide the fact, ladies and gentlemen, that I am overjoyed by the Amalfi Committee decision to honour Juan Linz with the highest honour European social science can award to anyone. Let me say it very openly: Juan Linz is a first-rate European, with German-Spanish roots, and a great citizen of the country he dearly and very intensely loves, Spain. A country whose profile, style and nature normally does not allow mild feelings of belonging or rejection. He is firmly on the belonging side. A strong democrat — with conservative leanings: he fears too much disruption as much as he loathes immobilism — he is a reformer. As a political sociologist and political scientist, he is one of the most outstanding in Europe and in the United States today.

Juan Linz honours the European Prize for Sociology and Social Science we award at Amalfi as much as it honours him. Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, we have the pleasure and the privilege to grant this year’s Amalfi Prize to Professor Juan Linz.

Thank you.

Salvador Giner (Barcelona, 1934) es doctor en Sociología por la Universidad de Chicago; fue profesor en Cambridge, Lancaster y West London (Brunel) entre 1965 y 1989 y, desde este año, catedrático en la UB. Fundador de la Federación Española de Sociología, también ha sido presidente y cofundador de la europea; director del Instituto de Estudios Sociales Avanzados del CSIC, editor de la *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, director asociado del *European Journal of Social Theory*; presidente del Institut d'Estudis Catalans entre 2005 y 2013; Creu de Sant Jordi de la Generalitat de Cataluña y Premio Nacional de Sociología y Ciencia Política del CIS. Es autor de numerosos libros y artículos como *Historia del pensamiento social* (1967), *La estructura social de Cataluña* (1980), *Ciudadanía, desigualdad social y Estado de Bienestar* (2003) y *El sagrat i el profà* (1996).