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0521023955 - Social Goals and Social Organization: Essays in Memory of Elisha Pazner

Edited by Leonid Hurwicz, David Schmeidler and Hugo Sonnenschein

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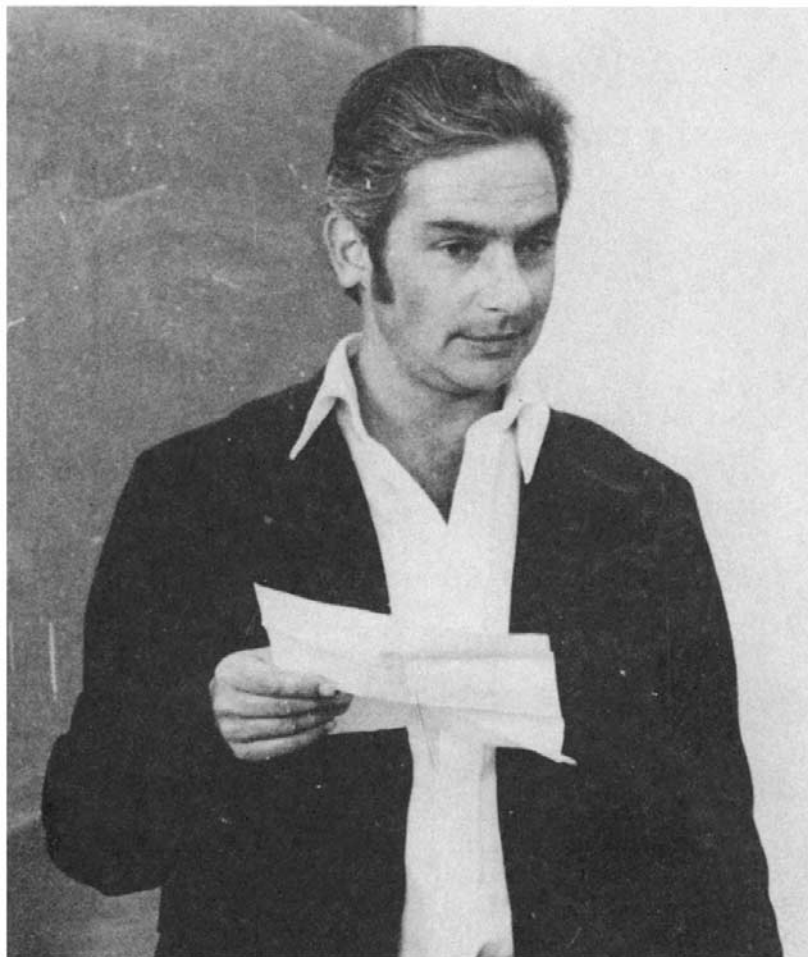
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Elisha A. Pazner, 1941–1979. (Photo by June Flanders.)

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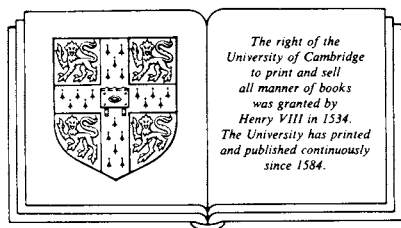
Essays in memory of Elisha Pazner

Edited by

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Elisha A. Pazner

Elisha A. Pazner was born on April 16, 1941, in Geneva, Switzerland, and died on March 28, 1979, in Jerusalem. He arrived in Israel in 1953, but left soon after for Argentina because of his father's foreign service position. His compulsory service in the Israeli Defense Force extended from May 1960 until October 1962. Elisha began his study of economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (B.A. 1966) and did graduate work at Harvard University (M.A. 1969, Ph.D. 1971). He was a member of the Department of Economics at Tel-Aviv University from October 1971 until his sudden death. During this time he spent over two years as a visitor at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

Elisha's interests in economics were quite broad. Although most of his research was in theory and mainly microtheory, he did work in macrotheory, including applications to the Israeli economy. He belonged to the minority of the members of his department who could quote the recent economic indicators of the Israeli economy.

Elisha's main research efforts were devoted to topics in public finance, public economics, general equilibrium analysis, welfare economics, social choice, incentives, and industrial organization. A large share of these works followed a research plan that was only slightly adjusted over the years. He was interested in the welfare evaluation of economic activity. The basic neoclassical premise that an agent's welfare depends only on his own consumption seemed to Elisha too restrictive, and his work on economic equity has helped us to understand how we can reach further. Elisha also emphasized the issue of procedural justice, which had been neglected by most of the profession. This was a major stimulus to his interest in decentralization and allocation mechanisms. As he put it in nonscientific terms, "It matters not only what you get but how you get it." Those who knew Elisha personally are not surprised that he made this point. Many will agree that the "how" is important for human motivation. Elisha believed that it can and should be part of welfare economics and it was the main topic on his research agenda at the time of his death.

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Editors' preface

Soon after Elisha Pazner's death, the editors of this book gathered together to plan a tribute to his memory. Rather than deciding to give Elisha's many friends the opportunity to provide a paper on a subject of their choice, we decided on a more ambitious undertaking. Our idea was to solicit a collection of surveys on subjects closely associated with Elisha's interest in the design and evaluation of economic mechanisms. We approached some of the people who we felt were making the most outstanding contributions in those areas. Because we believed that bargaining theory and the economics of competitive bidding were especially ripe for surveys, we extended our boundaries to include those topics as well, despite the fact that they fall marginally outside of Elisha's own research interests. We could not be more pleased with the result. It is a tribute to Elisha that so many busy people were willing to put aside their research to prepare these surveys. No areas of economic theory are more active today than those surveyed here; similarly, none are concerned with more basic issues. We have tried to honor Elisha with a book that he would have wanted to have on hand and use for his lectures.

The surveys are preceded by "A Perspective" by Leo Hurwicz. It contains a systematic account of the development of the literature on mechanism design and thus provides a context for both the surveys and the six published papers authored or coauthored by Elisha that follow.

L. H.
D. S.
H. S.

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