

Jean Gayon (1949 – 2018)

French philosopher and historian of science Jean Gayon died on April 28, 2018 aged 68. He was an internationally recognised specialist of Darwinism, and much of his career was dedicated to building bridges between philosophers and biologists.

Gayon completed a masters (agrégation) in philosophy in 1972, followed by a masters in evolutionary biology in 1983. Thanks to his dual training in philosophy and biology and outstanding energy, Gayon profoundly renewed the historical study of Darwinism and genetics in France.

In 1989, Jean Gayon defended a doctorate supervised by François Dagognet, where he examined the evolution of the natural selection theory before and after Darwin.

His thesis was translated into English by Matthew Cobb (*Darwinism's Struggle for Survival: Heredity and the Hypothesis of Natural Selection*, Cambridge University Press, 1998) and soon became a reference for Darwin scholars worldwide. In 1996, Gayon spent a year as International Fellow at the Center for the Study of Science in Society at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where he developed a long-standing collaboration and friendship with American historian of biology Richard M. Burian.

Much of Gayon's working life was devoted to developing interactions between both philosophers and biologists, and philosophers and historians of science. As such, he followed in the footsteps of Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem, Dagognet and continued the French tradition of epistemology by becoming chair of the Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences et des techniques, in Paris from 2010 to 2016, when he became emeritus professor.

As his academic career took him from the Université de Bourgogne in Dijon (1985-1997), to Université Paris VII-Diderot (1997-2001) and Université Paris1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (2001-2016), Gayon edited dozens of collective volumes both in French and in English. All are testament to his uncompromising scholarly standards and inexhaustible intellectual curiosity. A member of various academies (Leopoldina, International Academy of Philosophy of Science, International Academy of History of Science and of Integrated HPS), Jean Gayon remained extremely active until his final days.



Bernadette Bensaude Vincent