



In memoriam

## Jacques-Hubert Aubriot, 1936–2019



In the early 1970s, Jacques-Hubert Aubriot, Jean-Michel Thomine, and Frantz Langlais emerged onto the scene of the university hospitals of Western France. All three were disciples of Robert Méary and Robert Merle d'Aubigné, and, together with other French orthopaedic surgeons, they introduced radical changes that generated scientific and technical breakthroughs in the field of orthopaedics and trauma surgery. We owe them a tremendous debt and, here in Normandy, we are particularly beholden to Jacques-Hubert Aubriot. The Cochin university hospital in Paris where he first trained was a vibrant hub – an indispensable seat of learning for orthopaedic surgeons throughout the world. The faithful friends he made there went to visit him years later at his department at the university hospital in Caen.

He was naturally involved in the main orthopaedic organisations, including the SoFCOT<sup>1</sup> and SOO<sup>2</sup>, but the main target for his energies was perhaps his research group, the GUEPAR<sup>3</sup>, which he set up in the 1960s with a few orthopaedic surgery fellows in Paris. The GUEPAR developed the well-known knee hinge prosthesis, then other types of knee implants and prostheses for many joints, the only exception being the hip, which at the time was considered the exclusive province of the Garches and Cochin teaching hospitals. Over time, orthopaedic surgeons in hospital and community practice from various schools and generations joined the GUEPAR, where a deep sense of friendship continues to reign after half a century.

<sup>1</sup> Société française de chirurgie orthopédique et traumatologique, French Society for Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgery.

<sup>2</sup> Société d'orthopédie de l'Ouest, Orthopaedics Society for Western France.

<sup>3</sup> Groupe pour l'utilisation et l'étude des prothèses articulaires, Group for the Study and Use of Joint Implants.

Jacques-Hubert Aubriot followed the scientific approach advocated by Francis Bacon. He read everything, and his thousands of books and periodicals are heavily peppered with annotations and reflections. His boundless curiosity, which was free of prejudice, combined with his colossal orthopaedic culture to help him discover innovations. His masterstroke was to put his trust in his friend Gilles Bousquet, who, in the early 1980s, invented the dual-mobility hip implant. At the time, he alone believed in this concept, which now, 30 years later, has earned universal recognition.

Jacques-Hubert Aubriot's teachings extended far beyond the field of surgery. He was a tolerant, benevolent, and incorruptible person. He loved others and showed particular interest in those whose thinking differed from his. He was appalled by hate, conflicts, slander, and arrogance. He was incapable of hurtful acts, even committed involuntarily. He was wary of order unless necessary, as order confines and limits free being and thinking. He liked straightforward people who stood up for their beliefs with pride, freedom, and humility. He was self-effacing and uncomfortable with marks of distinction; he preferred to shine the light on others rather than on himself. He held deeply pacifist beliefs. He existed in a universe far above petty human conflicts.

His scientific activity was nurtured by this rich background of culture and wisdom. It is unsurprising that one of the knee implants developed by the GUEPAR was given the name of Kali, the goddess who destroys evil in all its forms, including the ramifications of ignorance.

Art was ever present in his life. He viewed any human creation as potentially conveying a message in more or less disguised form. Music, paintings, sculptures, performance art, architecture – all were worthy of attention. His insatiable curiosity, finely tuned sensitivity, and eclectic culture allowed him to see and to understand a world that is largely inaccessible to most of us. His personality was magnetic, although he could be difficult to follow, a fact he was aware of and accepted without resentment.

Jacques-Hubert Aubriot was a macrocosm, and it is impossible to separate the intellectual, the man of faith, the reader, the art lover, the teacher, the surgeon, and the researcher. He might, for instance, start an operation with a lecture on ceramic granulometry and end it with his thoughts about his latest foray into the writings of a Buddhist master.

Every person of science must welcome change every day and, as a man of wisdom, he also defended intemporal values.

Jacques-Hubert Aubriot never completely ceased to be active in orthopaedics. Every two months, he would come to lead a staff meeting at which his former students presented 'impossible' cases.

He developed familiarity with the Four Noble Truths during his many trips to India. One might think that was sufficient. Yet, during the last 15 years of his life, he returned to his studies of Christian and Muslim theology at the Protestant Theology Institute in Paris. His thirst for knowledge contrasted with the thirst others show for power.

We are more aware than ever of our good fortune in having shared four decades with a man of such stature.

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