To the great loss of the scientific community, Professor Helmut Thiele has passed away unexpectedly, but peacefully on Friday, January 10, 2003 in his home town of Cologne.

He was born on June 20, 1926 in Saratoga. In 1946, he took up a profession as “Neulehrer”, a specially created position as school teacher with a short training, to make up for the lack of teachers after World War II. From 1948 to 1953, he studied Mathematics and Physics at the Universities of Halle/Saale and Berlin. After graduate work in the logic group of Karl Schröter, he was awarded a Dr.rer.nat. degree at Humboldt University Berlin in 1958 for a Ph.D. Thesis on the “Theorie der endlichwertigen Lukasiewiczschen Prädikatenkalküle der ersten Stufe”.

His habilitation happened in 1964, also at Berlin’s Humboldt University, based upon a thesis “Wissenschaftstheoretische Untersuchungen in algorithmischen Sprachen I: Theorie der Graphschemata-Kalküle”, published as a separate monograph in 1966. Here, Thiele offered a first system of algorithmic (later to be called: dynamic) logic together with a thorough study of its syntactic and semantic aspects.
In 1964, Thiele became an associate professor in Jena, moved in 1968 back to Berlin’s Humboldt University, and became there full professor in 1969. He served as Head of the Division for Computer Science and Mathematical Cybernetics from 1969 till 1977. In 1973, he became a member of the German Academy of Scientists “Leopoldina” at Halle/Saale.

His research interests moved from mathematical logic into the logical and algorithmic foundations of computer science, and he contributed, e.g., to topics like stochastic automata, inductive learning, information retrieval, as well as analogical and nonmonotonic reasoning.


In 1991, Helmut Thiele retired in Berlin, later taking a position as guest professor at the University of Dortmund, where he has since then been an active member of the Department of Computer Science I.

During this time, Thiele started his work on basic problems of fuzzy sets and applied fuzzy logic which occupied him since and made him into a remarkable member of the fuzzy community.

Helmut Thiele was editor and co-editor for a number of journals. In particular, he founded the Journal of Information Processing and Cybernetics—formerly: Elektron. Informationsverarbeitung Kybernetik (EIK)—and was a co-founder of the Journal of Multiple Valued Logic.

During his life, Helmut Thiele educated and supervised a large number of graduate students, a significant number of which were able to find their way into the scientific community and became researchers and university professors themselves, carrying on the devotion to science which was so convincingly impersonated by Helmut Thiele. His numerous pupils will remember him as a helpful yet demanding teacher who would not rest until he was convinced of the complete commitment of his pupil to clear, theoretically well-founded scientific style.

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