

Pietro Grilli di Cortona, Faculty colleague

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It has been two years since 16 July 2015, the day when Pietro Grilli di Cortona left us after a short and inescapable illness. Two months later, on 25 September, Pietro would have turned 61. He left his family (wife Barbara, his three beloved children Bernardo, Giovanni and Sofia), his co-workers and pupils, his students, his friends and his colleagues too soon.

His life and his career were suddenly interrupted in a period marked by great achievements and significant public recognition. He had been a candidate, supported by a close-knit group as an alternative to the majority, for the election of the Rector of the *Roma Tre* University in the spring of 2013. In September of that year he was elected President of SISP, the Italian Society of Political Science (for which, in the previous year, he had coordinated the complex organisation of the annual Conference, held at Roma Tre). He had recently produced (in collaboration with Orazio Lanza, Barbara Pisciotto and Luca Germano) a manual of Political Science published by Utet. He had compiled a volume, published by Laterza, of his Master's lessons which he was particularly attached to, dedicated as they were to the processes of democratisation.

Pietro Grilli had become, in many cultural and institutional fields, a point of reference – for his human and professional style, marked by distinction and discretion, for the regularity and quality of his presence and for the clarity and consistency of his opinions on matters of University policy. And his very absence is, today, one of the most tangible and “present” elements in our national and local academic community.

I shared fifteen years teaching courses in Political Science at the Faculty of Political Science of the Roma Tre University with Pietro, and I was witness, albeit for a small part of his activity, to his constant and intense academic commitment and the mark it has made on me.

Our dialogue has never stopped. I often find myself exchanging ideas with him, with his point of view. Or at least with what I believe would have been his point of view on the many aspects of working in a university. **I learned so much from him and I have tried, without fully succeeding, to internalise his rare and wide-ranging scientific and academic expertise.**

We were different, but – I believe – complementary, even in our understanding of Political Science and education. We underwent different training, he was a pupil of Domenico Fisichella and I of Alberto Spreafico. He tending to political theory and international comparisons and I to empirical research and the study of the Italian political and institutional system.

Many times I asked myself, over the years, if Pietro had ever regretted wanting me in his Faculty, if I had been effective in his project to develop our subject area. What I found, though, was that Pietro was always willing to respect my independence, never taking on authoritative airs (which he could well have done given his prestige and rank). He was always close and supportive, especially in difficult periods of my life, in which he offered himself without reserve to help with my exams and with the needs of some of my undergraduate and PhD students.

Pietro once recounted to me the opinion of Professor Sergio Cotta – one of the greatest philosophers of law and a lecturer at the La Sapienza University, where Pietro had been a researcher for a decade – about the different vocations of university professors. There are those who favour teaching, those who are devoted primarily to research, and those who have special inclinations towards the administration and organisation of academic institutions.

But Pietro had all three gifts. **By choice he was a researcher where he had had a long, rigorous and unique scientific career** (and certainly not just a sequence of fleeting interests). Starting, moreover, from his individual work, painstaking and lonely, to come in recent years to designing investigative programmes through which he stimulated, and involved the energies of, other political scientists and younger researchers from various universities.

Pietro held several positions of organisation, directing among other things first the Department of Political Institutions and Social Sciences at our University and later the Department of International Studies. He presided over various undergraduate degree courses. He was a member of the Academic Senate of Roma Tre University. And, on behalf of the Political Science subject grouping, for a long time he was a member of the CUN, the National University Board.

Lastly, he headed the Scientific Board of the University's Political Studies Library which, for his tireless personal efforts right up to just a few days before his death, since 14 December 2015 has been named after him.

Only in the last two weeks of his life did Pietro suspend his public activities. His email of the evening of 1 July aroused much emotion in those who received it. In it, in essential and realistic terms, he wrote to the members of the Political Science Society that the deterioration in his health no longer allowed him to carry out the functions of President of the SISP (Italian Society of Political Science) effectively and therefore he surrendered the office into the hands of the Steering Committee. (So too with a view to the preparation of the annual Conference, scheduled for 10 to 12 September at the University of Calabria in Cosenza).

Even in those dramatic circumstances, his rationality and spirit of service were highlighted, leading him to lucidly examine the possible procedures for his succession, in the absence of similar precedents or specific provisions in the Charter.

Pietro was always like that – sober, balanced, without exaggeration, extremely kind and measured, even in moments of difficulty or conflict. Always involved, authoritative and reliable in academic activities, family life and social relations. And these marks of genuineness, measured response and simple elegance is also reflected in his scientific output and writing style.

Let me conclude by quoting a few lines of the last thing he wrote, posted on his blog on 22 April 2015, to remember his mother-in-law who had recently died.

“Sometimes the exceptional lies not in striking words or action but rather in a normal, honest life, marked by a sense of duty and great selflessness, and the absence of demands and self-pity.”

I think it is a moral testament and also a summary of how Pietro lived his life. As time goes on, we will feel his absence with ever greater understanding and regret.