

In memory of professor Domenico Mancía

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Domenico Mancía, full professor at the Department of Neurology, University of Parma, sadly passed away on 26th August 2004 aged 69, after a brave, but useless, fight against a serious illness for over a year.

He was born in Civitavecchia on 18th May 1935, but he regarded himself to all effects and purposes as a native of Polverigi (Ancona), where he moved to aged just three with his family upon appointment of his doctor father as a general practitioner there.

After graduating in Medicine and Surgery at the University of Siena, he embarked on his career in 1964 at the Neurology Clinic of the University of Parma, which he never left, making his way up the academic ladder to become a specialist in Clinical Nervous and Mental Disorders in 1966, a specialist in Radiology and Nuclear Medicine in 1968, full assistant in 1969,

qualified university teacher of Neurology in 1972, associate professor in 1980 and full professor in 1986. From 1st November 1990 he was Head of the Neurology Clinic at the University of Parma until May 2003, when he was forced to take early retirement due to health reasons. From 1996 to 2003 he was also the Head of the Post-graduate School of Neurology of the University of Parma, and from December 2001 Head of the Department of Neuroscience at the University Hospital of Parma.

From the very onset (thanks also to the teachings and invaluable suggestions of such luminaries as Fabio Visintini and Mirko Carreras), his research interests were focused on both experimental and clinical neurophysiology. Through study periods abroad, in particular at the Timome Hospital in Marseilles, led by Henry Gastaut, he was able to improve scientific knowledge in the field of electroencephalography and epileptology and to complete the acquisition of a correct, effective methodological approach to clinical research, an acquired knowledge that was to become an inseparable part of his academic life.

Every great celebrity in the university world (and Domenico Mancía was to all effects and purposes one of these), only acquires such status by self-distinction, not just in terms of the mandatory didactic and research attributes, but also for other talents that determine unicity. Against the backdrop of an inflated and increasingly anonymous university environment undergoing a difficult transitional phase from a "baronial world", full of qualities good and bad, which is inevitably dwindling away to be replaced by a modern conception of knowledge management that, in spite of its difficulty in becoming established, will only serve to

bring with it a felicitous blend of culture and efficiency, the figure of Mancia stands out for a series of characteristics: organizational intelligence, innate communicative skills, explosive vital energy, a propensity for constructive dialogue, thinking and acting without any prejudice whatsoever and an enormous capacity for achieving goals, however ambitious or arduous, with perspicacity and perseverance.

It was thanks to these characteristics that in the Nineties the Neurology Clinic of the University of Parma, under Mancia, made a considerable impact, achieving renown on a national level, and demonstrating great scientific and organizational development in the field of neurophysiology.

Thanks to his many talents, Mancia was also a cardinal point of reference for the Faculty of Medicine, whose members would never hesitate to draw from his experience and wisdom every time there was a complex problem to be solved.

However, Domenico Mancia was not just a prestigious figure within his professional sphere; his natural tendency not to shut himself off in his own particular field, gratifying and fruitful though it was, but reach out to others, led him to express his strong personality in civil concerns and in the arts as well.

A staunch believer in the Socialist Party, he enjoyed dialogue with all, even with those whose ideas differed from his own, and with the utmost naturalness he would succeed in defusing the most complicated situations to achieve target objectives.

From 1975 right through to 1995, he was mayor of Polverigi, the town to which he was bound by a profound friendship, and which, to his immense joy, in July 2002 gave him honorary citizenship for his important contributions to the social, cultural and economic growth of the town community.

Open to the multiple aspects of cultural life and always intellectually drawn towards new forms of expression, in 1977 he instituted the International Inteatro Festival, one of the most influential in Europe. Now, thanks to his enthusiasm, authority and ongoing efforts, Inteatro, of which Prof. Mancia was president until 1981, has become the Teatro Stabile di Innovazione, a vitally important point of reference in the field of study of art and cultural innovation, a showcase for talented youngsters, a meeting place for artists invol-

ved in the contamination of the languages of entertainment.

Domenico Mancia was certainly an intelligent, efficient and modern university professor, a thorough, conscientious doctor, a staunch ally of his patients, an efficient, far-sighted manager, a level-headed, democratic and knowledgeable politician and an inquisitive, practical intellectual, but above all else he was a person of great, unparalleled humanity.

He could soon get along with everyone, and though retaining the same manner was at ease with young and old, powerful and humble, rich and poor, cultured and uneducated, conceited and modest and arrogant and shy people alike. He loved life in all its various aspects and was extremely tolerant of those whose ideas or ideals differed partially or even completely from his own. There was only one thing that he really could not stand, may be because it was the direct opposite of the way he was: hypocritical moralism put on to disguise base personal interests.

Mancia was a jolly and enormously likeable person; he would always give invaluable advice and concrete help without making a point of it. He was always ironic, and it often looked like he never even took himself too seriously. I rarely saw him sad: there was the illness and subsequent death of his mother; and then, during the last few months of his own life, possibly due to the incredible realization that he would have to leave his dear wife, Anna, and beloved daughter, Ilaria.

I will never forget one afternoon at the beginning of autumn several years back when, with his customary solicitous hospitality, taking advantage of a few hours in-between congressional obligations, he took me, along with several other friends and colleagues, to visit the outskirts of Siena, which he knew well from his university days. At one point he and I were alone together as an enigmatic sun sank gently beyond the horizon. I was taken aback by his confession, delivered with a sad expression in his eyes that I had never before seen in him, of his great love of sunsets - he had always found them mesmerizing. The same expression was in his eyes during the last days of his illness: Domenico Mancia passed away towards the end of August, aged 69, just like an inevitable mysterious sunset, marking the end of yet another summer and of a great man who was so full of life.