

Ricordo di Vittorio Olgiati

In memory of Vittorio Olgiati

On December 28, 2023, Vittorio Olgiati, aged 74, passed away in Legnano, the Lombard historic city in which he had been born and had been leaving in the past few years. He had almost disappeared from social life since quite a long time, presumably due to the serious health problems that had convinced him to leave the academia beforehand.

Vittorio has played a remarkable role in the field of sociology of law, both nationally and internationally. A student of Renato Treves in Milan University, he won his degree in law in 1975, soon became a practicing lawyer and spent some years in the legal profession in the field of civil and labour law, in parallel with his activity as a part time and fixed-term researcher in sociology of law, as a member of Treves' research team. Once he got a permanent contract in 1980, he chose to devote himself to studies and the academic career. Besides Treves' obvious influence, he took inspiration from the fresh atmosphere that characterized the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Law at Milan University between the 1970s and the 1980s, especially from the teaching of Vincenzo Tomeo, who had taken over Treves' chair in sociology of law in 1983. Tomeo was a man of profound culture and a sophisticate researcher, who affected a wide number of students and collaborators, among them Vittorio, who admired his teaching and took from it, especially, a propensity to look behind the appearances and to doubt of the most consolidated theories. Vittorio himself was, actually, in perpetual search of original ideas and the corresponding expressions. He covered quite a large area of subject matters, from the legal professions – his predominant concern throughout his life – to such demanding themes as, amongst others, legal pluralism, law and communications, constitutionalism, and the construction of the European legal system.

Vittorio's CV gives evidence of the richness of his scientific production, with 12 written and, predominantly, edited or co-edited books, and about 100 articles or parts of volumes, in either Italian or English, in first class journals and with high ranking publishers. His international leaning was a special trait of his personality as a scholar, especially so when, on Treves' proposal, he served as scientific adviser of the Oñati Institute and co-operated with André-Jean Arnaud, the first scientific director, in the fascinating adventure of the IISL consolidation between 1990 and 1991. This opportunity helped him definitely to strengthen his image as an international scholar. As an active member of the ISA-RCSL, he attended virtually all its congresses and conferences, usually contributing to the proceedings with

papers and vivid interventions in discussions. He took part permanently to the activities of the WG on the legal professions and chaired the Working Group on Social and Legal Systems for quite a long while. His role in the RCSL was widely acknowledged until he was elected as president for the term 2009-2014. He also served as member of the editorial boards of important journals, among them the *Law and Society Review*, *Law and Politics*, *Legal Ethics* and *Sociologia del diritto*.

Vittorio left his post as researcher in Milan University in 1999, when he was appointed as associate professor in the Sociology Department of Carlo Bo University of Urbino, where he gave regular courses of Sociology of Organization, Organization Theory and Sociology of Professions. He succeeded in combining such duties with a tireless activity as lecturer in a number of other academic institutions both in Italy and abroad. In 2008 he moved to the Law School of the University of Macerata, Department of Studies on Social Change, Legal Institutions and Communications. There he expected to reach the top of his career and become full professor, what would have been indeed possible since in 2010 he got a unanimous recognition of his titles for this position from the ministerial *ad hoc* committee. In fact, the selection procedure at his local university had not yet been opened when, four or five years later, his health started to suffer and brought him, eventually, to his untimely end.

Beyond his scholarly merits, Vittorio was a gentle human being and good friend of all those who accompanied him in his life path. He had a subtle sense of humour and used to speak in a low voice also when he expressed his opinions toughly and kept stuck to them firmly, at all costs and even *contra mundum* if he thought it necessary.

The community of socio-legal scholars is indebted to him and will not forget him.

Vincenzo Ferrari