CABEQ special issue in memory of Prof. Paolo Alessi

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Prof. Paolo Alessi obtained his high school degree at the "Liceo Scientifico G. Oberdan" (Trieste, Italy), and his masters' degree in chemistry at the University of Trieste when the modern way of conceiving science was still in its infancy. However, science quickly fascinated him and he joined the University of Trieste, where he taught industrial chemistry and instrumental analysis for many years until his retirement. He was also head of the Department of Chemical, Environmental and Raw Materials Engineering (DICAMP) at the University of Trieste.

I had the pleasure of meeting him in the 1986-87 academic year, when I took his course on instrumental analysis. To me, he seemed very strict, displaying a rare determination and persistence despite his friendliness and politeness. It was only at the end of his university career, around 2011, that I had the opportunity to get to know the "real man" hidden behind his official appearance. For example, I discovered that he was a poet, when, just before Christmas, my colleagues and I received an e-mail with an unexpected attachment: one of his poems. Since then, a good relationship had developed with Paolo, who strongly supported my candidacy for the CABEQ Editorial Board (he was Associate Editor of CABEQ). In fact, he believed that Trieste absolutely had to have a representative on the CABEQ Editorial Board. Probably this conviction reflected the similarity between the composition of the CABEQ Editorial Board (Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and Italy, all members of the European Community today) and the international role Trieste played during the Austro-Hungarian Empire: a melting pot of very different cultures living together profitably. He also told me that this was the reason why the Trieste dialect took on the role of a lingua franca (like English in academia today), enabling different people to understand each other (according to him, this is probably the reason why the Trieste dialect is still regularly spoken today and also used in official situations). His impressive love and attachment to Trieste became really clear to me when, while driving with him through the square "Chino Alessi" in Trieste, he told me that, since the 18th century, the eldest son of the Alessi family was alternately named "Chino" or "Paolo". Being also ironic, he told me: "La me sè andata ben: me sè tocà Paolo ..." (I was lucky, I was called Paolo ...). Being the father of two daughters, he stopped this tradition, but he was not upset at all. Now that he has passed away, I remember him as an old friend who unexpectedly wanted to share with me his experiences and feelings from his long life, more or less as the English writer J. K. Rowling imagined in her Harry Potter. For this reason, when my colleague Prof. Angelo Cortesi informed me of Paolo's departure, I immediately decided to propose a special CABEQ issue in his memory, an idea that was immediately accepted by all the Board members. For this reason, I must thank them all for this decision, and all the authors who made possible the realisation of this special issue in memory of Paolo.

I believe that the various topics covered in the contributions to this special issue testify to Paolo's diverse scientific interests, even if he did not deal with all of them. The first contribution is by his friend and colleague Prof. Ireneo Kikic, with whom I believe Paolo spent the most important part of his scientific career. Then we have the work of Pavlíček and co-workers, dealing with vapour-liquid equilibria, a topic that falls within Paolo's research. This is followed by the work of his friend Kurtanjek, which deals with eutectic solvents. The work of Cortesi and co-workers reminds me of Paolo's research activities, as it deals with the use of supercritical carbon dioxide in extraction processes. The work of Staltari and co-workers detaches from Paolo's research as it deals with rheological and low-field NMR characterisation of sputum from cystic fibrosis patients. Mio and co-workers return to thermodynamics, proposing a study of carbon dioxide capture in the steel industry. Finally, Mukherjee and Koller conducted a study on circular materials for sustainable development and growth, a topic that would certainly have attracted Paolo's attention.