

can work to create more student-centered courses, no matter what the length or delivery method. We believe our plan shows promise in these regards and will ultimately provide a fair-minded judgment on the issues involved. It is certainly more robust than a judgment based solely on grades and retention rates, and is a promising means toward overcoming the bias of those who view change as “dumbing-down” curriculum. Without having an ongoing comprehensive course-based outcomes assessment plan in place, we would have little of substance to consider. But, more is needed. While our OA plan provides instructors with SLO-specific objectives that can be used to effectively alter the architecture and delivery of their courses, training in the principles of backwards design is a necessary next step. A related concern is to show faculty that this plan as developed is not an infringement on their academic freedom and does not require them to sacrifice either their standards or passion. Following our judgment that the pilot three-week distance-learning course was a failure as conceived, the reasons for that failure are not entirely clear despite the outcomes on all fronts. It is altogether possible that new guidelines for curriculum and course development (and delivery methods) that better incorporate the expected outcomes of courses can and will result in finding ways to adapt those same courses to any number of term lengths. What is clear is that the thinking required to monitor that pilot along with the development of a comprehensive yet flexible Outcomes Assessment plan places our philosophy program in a far better position to consider restructuring it along the lines of shorter courses for both face-to-face and online distance learning. A potentially helpful development is HCC’s move to a new Learning Management System based on “Moodle Rooms” that appears promising. Should eight-week sessions become the norm at our institution, including eight-week hybrid courses, it is also imperative that a continuing effort be made to maintain our OA plan’s effectiveness. The integrity of our program and future for teaching philosophy in a rapidly changing learning environment demand it.

Conclusion

The only conclusion that might be drawn from the preceding discussion is that the jury is still out as far as determining the precise combination of course length and online technology for its optimum application to courses in philosophy, and more generally to courses in all of the humanities and social sciences. What is presented is an idea for how to think about making such determinations by combining best practices in teaching and learning with course design and the selection and use of effective tools for ongoing student-teacher engagement. Student expectations that courses be offered in shorter and shorter time-frames must be moderated with the expectations of teaching faculty. Faculty expectations must be embodied in measurable outcomes showing real student success in the subject area and a willingness to adopt correlative methods of delivery. What I see emerging is an ongoing transition and development towards a very different kind of college and university experience, one that will continually transgress conventional modes of course content and teaching strategies until such time that a new sense of equilibrium is established. Meanwhile, the presenting challenge is to seek out the best available tools from all sides, to meet the challenge, and build for the future.

The Heritage of Gaetano Aurelio Lanzarone

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The night of October 3, Gaetano Aurelio Lanzarone, full professor in Computer Science at the University of Insubria, Varese, Italy, passed away. He suffered from an incurable illness since at least 2008, but he never missed a day’s work, except in the very last days. I had the opportunity to work closely with him during the last years (2002-2010) of his very long academic and professional career. What I want to do here is to give a memoir of his career, with special attention to my personal experience with him, while his smile, laughter, and humor cannot be described in words, but only in the language of our hearts and memories.

Born in Palermo (Italy) in 1945, Elio—as close colleagues and friends called him—obtained his Master’s degree in physics in 1970 at the University of Milan, Italy. At that time, there was no educational curriculum in Computer Science in Milan; even if he once said that “Physics is the Queen of Sciences,” his Master’s thesis was in Computer Science, his real field of interest. In fact, he started to work as a consultant for R&D Labs of Honeywell Information System Italia until 1976 and then he became the head of the Software Methodologies Group at the R&D Labs of Italtel from 1976 to 1985—a very important Italian Telecommunications Company in those years. His first academic experience was lecturing in the courses in Cybernetics and in Computer Science at the University of Milano, during the academic years from 1974 to 1978, and from 1978 to 1985 as a tenured professor. From 1982 to 1984 he was a member of the group of European experts appointed for the definition of the European research programmes JEPE-IT/ESPRIT (Joint European Planning Exercise - Information Technology / European Strategic Programme for Research and Development in Information Technology) and PET-RACE (Planning Exercise in Telecommunications - Research and Development in Advanced Communications Technologies in Europe). For at least a generation of Italian computer scientists, Lanzarone is still known nowadays as one of the first people who introduced structured programming in Italy, after the famous Dijkstra’s dictum in 1968; in fact, he co-authored a very influential book about this topic (Maiocchi, Lanzarone, and Polillo 1986).

In my experience, Lanzarone was always curious to explore new fields of knowledge and to have new experiences and opportunities to grow. I remember an informal talk with him about this attitude of mind that causes his turn of interest from software engineering to Artificial Intelligence in the 1980s, a field in which he is considered a pioneer in Italy. When he became full-time associate professor at the University of Milan, in December 1985, he quickly founded the Laboratory of Logic Programming. His major research scientific result—in my opinion the most important in his whole life, obtained with Stefania Costantini (University of L’Aquila, Italy)—is Reflective Prolog, which is an augmentation of pure Prolog (Horn clauses) with capabilities of self-reference and logical reflection, using quotation and unquotation mechanisms (Costantini and Lanzarone 1994). In the 1990s he applied his scientific results in the field of knowledge engineering: in particular, he used logic programming in order to represent mind models belonging to Cognitive Science computationally, in particular with Stefania Bandini (University of Milano-Bicocca). For instance, he had co-authored a paper where the theory of induction by Johnson-Laird was modeled in terms of logic programming (Bandini, Lanzarone, and Valpiani 1998).

However, in spite of his affiliation to University as a professor, he never lost attention to the collaboration between University and ICT industry, being scientific coordinator of several research projects funded by different public and private institutions, at any level, from EU programmes to Lombardy. In particular, he was responsible from 1995 to 1998 for the participation to the European Consortium of the project THAlland (Telematics, Hypermedia and Artificial Intelligence), funded by the European SOCRATES program, for the definition of a Master Curriculum in Telemedia Studies.

Another important trait of the personality of Lanzarone was his firm belief that the dichotomy “humanities vs. sciences” is false: humanists can profit from the results of sciences, and vice versa, he used to say, without unnecessary hierarchies between the two groups. At the University of Insubria, his idea of fruitful cooperation between humanists and scientists could become reality: for example, he published some papers with an art historian (Benini, Lanzarone, and Spiriti 2007). At the end of the 1990s, the newborn University of Insubria (Varese-Como, Italy) gave him the opportunity to establish first (2000) the Research Center “Informatica interattiva”—meaning both “informatics in interaction” and “interactive informatics”—and then (2004) the Department of Computer Science and Communication (DICOM), where he was Head until the dismissal of the Department at the end of September 2011.

From March 2000, as a full-time full professor, he started the undergraduate curricula in Computer Science and Communication Sciences. I met him first in 2002 as a R&D consultant of a start-up company, Pumpkin Srl, for a couple of projects where DICOM was partner about Digital Cities and a virtual gallery of an exhibition of the portrait in Lombardy in the cinquecento. I already had a Master in Communication Sciences (1998) and another in Computer Science for the Humanities (2000): soon after our first meeting, I entered his team, working in particular with Marco Benini—now a Marie Curie Fellow in mathematics, University of Leeds. After 2003, I had a couple of research grants at the crossroad of Computer Science and Linguistics, and completed my education with a Ph.D. in Computer Science. In both cases the supervisor was him. But I collaborated with him not only for research but also in lecturing. In fact, he decided to open a course for graduate students about Computing and Philosophy, whereas a correspondent course for undergraduates about History of Computing was established, for students in Computer Science and Communication as well. I actively collaborated with these two groups of students as a tutor alongside Lanzarone, while being lecturer in the last two academic years, after finishing my Ph.D. in January 2009. During this experience, we made an experiment of collaborative learning and philosophical writing among students using a wiki (Gobbo and Lanzarone 2006). His perspective on the discipline was published rightly in this *Newsletter* (Lanzarone 2007). His research interests seemed never to stop: in fact, thanks to his support, I was able to co-found the European Summer School in Agile Programming (ESSAP), a particular approach to software

engineering, which “resembles the old good common sense present in the early days of software engineering when I was involved in structured programming,” he once told me. ESSAP lasted three editions, calling Ph.D. students, graduates, and professionals from every part of the continent to the beautiful Villa Toeplitz in Varese.

However, in the last years his main interests were epistemology of computing and computer ethics as well. From 2005 to 2008 Professor Lanzarone was active into the community of researchers in Computing and Philosophy: in spite of the short years of engagement, he not only participated in various conferences (E-CAP and NA-CAP in 2007, ETHICOMP in 2008, where we jointly presented a contribution, see Lanzarone and Gobbo 2008) but also was co-organizer and invited speaker—alongside Peter Boltuc, Keith Miller, and Vincent Müller—to the first Computing and Philosophy Global Course, a result of collaboration between several European and American universities, based on an earlier Swedish National Course organized by Gordana Dodig-Crnkovic.

Lanzarone’s heritage is great in people, like me, who had the chance to work closely with him. Farewell, Elio. Have a nice last trip.

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