

OBITUARY

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## Prof. Faustino Savoldi

*Mauro Ceroni<sup>1</sup>, Ileana Ranzini<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Professore Associato di Neurologia - Università degli Studi di Pavia, Responsabile dell'Unità Complessa di Neurologia Speciale, Istituto Neurologico Nazionale Casimiro Mondino, Pavia; <sup>2</sup>Ileana Ranzini - Segreteria Unità Complessa di Neurofisiopatologia - Istituto Neurologico Nazionale Casimiro Mondino Pavia

**Abstract.** The human stature of Professor Faustino Savoldi is outlined first, his 360 ° mental openness that ranges from phenomenological philosophy, to Neurology, from Psychiatry to Neuroscience as a forerunner. In addition, he disclosed all this inside humility, in a frame of simplicity always ready for child's amazement. He said welcome to every human being regardless of their social level, a look at the value of everything that approached, even if very far from his vision of reality and his sensitivity, as the volume "La Coscienza", the monumental work of the last 15 years of his life, impressively proves.

**Key words:** phenomenology, neurology, psychiatry, neuroscience

### PROF. FAUSTINO SAVOLDI

**Riassunto.** Viene delineata prima di tutto la statura umana del Professor Faustino Savoldi, la sua apertura mentale a 360° che spazia dalla filosofia fenomenologica, alla Neurologia, alla Psichiatria, alle Neuroscienze da antesignano. E tutto questo insieme con una umiltà, una semplicità sempre pronta allo stupore da bambino, un'accoglienza ad ogni essere umano indipendentemente dal proprio livello sociale, uno sguardo valorizzatore a tutto ciò che avvicinava, anche se molto lontano dalla sua visione della realtà e dalla sua sensibilità, come è dimostrato in modo impressionante nell'opera monumentale degli ultimi 15 anni della sua vita, il volume intitolato "La Coscienza" edito da ARAS Edizioni.

**Parole chiave:** fenomenologia, neurologia, psichiatria, neuroscienze

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**Resumen.** En primer lugar, se destaca la estatura humana del profesor Faustino Savoldi, su apertura mental de 360° que va desde la filosofía fenomenológica, a la neurología, a la psiquiatría, a la neurociencia de un precursor. Y todo esto dentro de una humildad, una simplicidad siempre lista para el asombro infantil, una bienvenida a cada ser humano independientemente de su nivel social, una mirada al valor de todo lo que se acerca, incluso si está muy lejos de su visión de la realidad y su sensibilidad, tan impresionantemente demostrada en la obra monumental de los últimos 15 años de su vida, el volumen titulado "La Coscienza" publicado por ES Edizioni.

**Palabras clave:** fenomenología, neurología, psiquiatría, neurociencia

When Faustino Savoldi left us on January 14 th 2016 with a sudden and unexpected death, I felt like a great emptiness in myself. When I arrived at his home and met his wife Mrs. Carla, I perceived well a great silence, a silence that took all of us present there.

In that silence I better realized the greatness of Faustino, of the Professor, of the Scholar, of my dearest friend. I would venture to say that one realizes that such grandeur, the greatness of the human soul, which some great spirits express especially, overcomes even death. What a strange human law this is for which it is in detachment that one becomes more aware of the greatness of what he has lived.

In so many, we have partaken and enjoyed the greatness of Faustino. Professor Faustino Savoldi and his wife Carla, because from this point of view they are inseparable, have constituted a point of attraction, of friendship, of common journey, for many. Nobody was



**Figure 1.** 60ies, Neurological Institute Mondino, Savoldi young Neurologist

excluded from this friendship. I remember the tenderness that Faustino had with Luigi Contini, a member of the ward of the Mondino Institute, whom he treated professionally and his pain until crying for not having been able to save him from an extreme gesture that Luigi, his friend, did.

In so many, we have enjoyed this inexhaustible source of boundless culture and information that Faustino was. However, without any pomposity, without any affectation, as we talk with friends, almost incidentally. Moreover, he deeply pondered everything, judged delicately, seizing the good of even the most distant cultural position from his philosophical mood. From this point of view the book on Consciousness, the work of his last 15 years, is a marvelous anthology in which everything is valued for every detail of good and truth that it contains.

Yet his immense culture, his astonishing knowledge of Phenomenology, the philosophical branch that has inherited the greatness of ancient philosophy, are not sufficient to explain the fascination that he exercised over our consciences. In him, gruffness, shyness, sometimes saying only few words, housed a child's heart, ready to marvel at every little thing; open to everyone he met, involving the others in his bond. We have truly enjoyed all of his friendship, his humanity, his ability to share.

Perhaps you are thinking that I am neglecting fundamental aspects of Faustino. He was the finest psychiatrist phenomenologist author of unforgettable descriptions of the disturbances of consciousness (merged into a chapter of "The Consciousness"). He focused his curiosity on aphasias, on the concept of time from its physical, biological and existential point of view. He embodied a savant critic of psychoanalysis, being at the same time an experimentalist neurologist and pharmacologist. The expert clinical neurologist held the Neurological Clinic for 20 years, writing a mass of scientific articles, known all over the world, becoming the University Professor feared by all the medical students for the Neurology exam .

Yes, all this constituted the concreteness of the human story of Faustino, but never became the underlining of a role, a claim to a power, an opportunity to stand on a pedestal. All this has been crossed by his beautiful humanity, kept in its proper value.

Let us just briefly summarize his neuroscientific carrier.

In 1957, Prof. Faustino Savoldi began to attend the Institute of Human Physiology directed by Prof. Luigi De Caro, at the University of Pavia, dealing mainly with experimental research on epilepsy and electroshock. That period meant for him a top experimental physiological training because of the presence of specialized laboratories and the expert guide of Prof. Luigi de Caro. Actually, he was one of the first researchers who used animal models until he turned out as an international reference figure.

His researches, always in the field of electroencephalography, at the very beginning involved specific and detailed topics: for instance in the Steinert's disease the calcification of the basal ganglia. On animal models, he studied the cortical responses to the stimulation of the caudate nucleus with the administration of substances with a synchronizing and desynchronizing action. To these publications, he added the electromyographic studies of the Hoffman reflex (1966) in cerebellar patients and later the study of the Jendrassik maneuver in parkinsonians. He led EEG investigations in patients with extrapyramidal disorders from psychotropic drugs and finally he dedicated his thinking to inherited family forms of Fahr's disease, electrocardiographic aspects in the chronic alcoholism until developing his studies on cerebellar atrophy, hypochondriacal mania and migraine (1977). Prof Savoldi was the first in 1963 to ascertain the antiepileptic action of diazepam. He conducted experimental studies of electroencephalography applied to neuropharmacological investigation and neurophysiological research on the threshold of convulsivity for electrical stimuli and the processes of inhibition of epileptic discharge. He studied functional aspects of neurological pain, quantified EEG analysis and its experimental applications in the monitoring of cerebral vasculopathies. We can mention, for example, the study of an electroencephalographic picture on a case of prolonged survival (5 months) in a state of coma resulting from a head injury with the aim of preventing numerous complications to find a possible recovery in the patient even if incomplete (1963).

He participated in the foundation of the Italian Society of Neuropsychopharmacology in November

1965. In the field of clinical pharmacology, he conducted research on the inhibition of MAO in the elderly. The Faculty Council rewarded him for scientific work in the academic years 1963-64 and 1966-67.

Regarding the research of experimental psychopharmacology, Prof. Savoldi has dealt with the modifications induced by active substances on the central nervous system. In particular, remarkable remains the work on haloperidol, triperidol, hydroxyzine, tricyclic antidepressants (1970). In the same years, he proposed a classification of psychotropic drugs on the basis of the modifications induced on the hippocampal electrical activity in the rabbit. These researches, associated to important drugs such as those mentioned, initially concerned the neurophysiological aspect on the animal but then Prof. Savoldi's interest reached and always remained on human beings with particular attention to the related electroencephalographic changes. So he highlighted the effects and limits of these drugs. Studies of the hippocampal electric activity in the rabbit, for example, served to illustrate the effects and mechanism of new antidepressants or new treatments for migraine. In addition, Prof. Savoldi was interested in the neurophysiological effects of psychotropic drugs on the central nervous system and their action on sleep. At the advent of the directional Doppler (DDS) he became interested in a correlated investigation between the new techniques and the previous ones that originate clinical trials on patients with vascular pathology.



**Figure 2.** 2012, at home, Savoldi Philosopher and Author

Faustino the great layman, the authentic layman, the one who had always had great admiration for history and the social and cultural presence of Christianity, who knew well with Benedetto Croce that in Italy we cannot fail to tell us Christians, but that remained faithful until the end to the fair use of reason in all circumstances. It is within this frame that he accepted to present the encyclical of John Paul II *Fides et Ratio*, of which he held great esteem because the Pope was a professor of the phenomenological school. It was a huge success at the University of Pavia and received congratulations from the Vatican.

It is men like him about whom wrote Benedict XVI and recently Pope Francesco himself when they

thanked the Enlightenment and the secular position because they allowed the Catholic Church to mature and grasp the indispensable value of religious freedom, codified by Vatican II: no one can be obliged, not even in the name of truth, to embrace a faith. There is no authentic faith without freedom, as there is no true use of reason without ultimate respect and complete freedom for each human being.

Thanks Faustino for what you have been and you are for us and for the whole neurological community. You always shall remain in the heart and in the mind of each of us and, allow me to add, in the heart of God for eternity.