



Professor Bogusław Żernicki (1931 – 2002)

Professor Bogusław Żernicki was born in Dąbrowa Górnicza on April 10, 1931. He spent his childhood in Warsaw. While still in high school, after being fascinated by scientific publications on mental activity, he decided to devote his professional efforts to research work. In 1954 he graduated from the Medical Academy of Łódź, where his family settled after World War II. As a medical student he started experimental work under the supervision of prof. Jerzy Konorski, who had just reestablished the Nencki Institute in Łódź, its new location. Żernicki was formally employed there as an assistant in 1953. From this time on his professional life evolved in the Institute. He moved to Warsaw with Nencki when it received its new building in the capital. Here he defended his doctoral dissertation on the habituation of conditioned reflexes (1959), received his D.Sc. (habilitation) degree in 1966 and professorship (1972 and 1980). In 1991 he became a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was deeply devoted to science but he admired also the spirit and glamour of many other aspects of life. He described himself as a "physician by education, physiologist by profession, but admirer of psychology and philosophy."

Professor Żernicki directed the Department of Neurophysiology for the last 27 years and at the same time headed the Laboratory of Visual Perception, which he had organized himself. His most known and cited discovery concerned the pretrigeminal preparation. He proved that the brain, isolated from sensory stimuli, preserves its basic behavioral functions, i.e., it continues to learn. Later on he studied the perceptive and associative mechanisms of learning after deprivation of pattern vision at early developmental stages. He was an author of more than 100 papers on central mechanisms of conditioning, isolated brain, physiology of the visual system and developmental neurophysiology, published in prestigious neuroscience journals including *Science*, *Behavioral Brain Research*, *Behavioral Neuroscience* and *Brain Research*. He also wrote four books in the *Recent Discoveries of Science* series, many chapters in monographs, and textbooks and articles on policy in science.

He conferred 11 doctoral degrees. Most of his pupils continue research work in tenured positions in and outside the Institute. He lectured at the biological and psychological faculties of the universities in Warsaw and Łódź and in the open lecture series organized by Polish Academy of Sciences.

Professor Żernicki frequently worked together with colleagues from abroad. He spent many months on sabbatical leaves in the Institute of Physiology of the University of Pisa, the Department of Comparative Physiology of the University of Paris, the Physiological Institute of the Chilean University in Santiago, the Brain Research Institute of the University of Rochester, and the University of Nice. He supervised grants in the Nencki Institute financed by NIMH, hosted many scientists from other countries in his laboratory, and organized several international conferences and meetings. In recent years he was engaged in a joint project with the Department of Neuropsychology at the Catholic University of Leuven concerning the effects of early visual deprivation in children and cats.

Editing of *Acta Neurobiologiae Experimentalis* was an important part of his professional activity. For a long time (1966-1972) he co-edited the Journal with prof. J. Konorski, and after becoming the Editor-in-Chief (1973-1989) he continuously cared for the high standard of accepted articles and successfully promoted ANE on the international market. This effort resulted in listing ANE on the ISI citation list where the journal is one of the most cited among publications from the former Eastern European countries.

Professor Żernicki was a member of ESF International Scientific Committee for European Training Program in Brain and Behavior Research (1981-1984), and an active member of many national and international scientific societies and organizations, including the Warsaw Scientific Society, Polish Neuroscience Society, Pavlovian Society of North America, and International Brain Research Organization.

He has been a member of the Scientific Council of the Nencki Institute since 1967, and was elected to the positions of its co-chairman (1978-1983) and chairman (1993-1995). He was also a Scientific Secretary of the Committee for Physiological Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the president of its Committee for Neurophysiology (1978-1990). From 1984 to 1987 he was a member of the Central Committee for Approval of Scientific Degrees.

He was honored with high state medals and prizes. He also received prizes from the Polish and Czechoslovak Academies of Science and scientific prizes from the Secretary of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Professor Bogusław Żernicki, known to many of us as Boguś, was a mainstay and personal emblem of virtue for us. Several generations of neurophysiologists from the Nencki Institute were inspired by his scientific passion, broad concern, talent for research and organization, which allowed him to keep the high rank of the Department of Neurophysiology on a national and international scale. We will, however, remember him not only because of his achievements. We shall keep in mind his wisdom in everyday life, his goodness and warmth. His personality created in our community the sense of belonging and friendship. His passion for science was contagious. He cared for all members of the team and always appreciated their successes.

Professor Żernicki died in Brwinów on April 23, 2002. It is hard to believe he is gone.... We will miss his support and advice. His thoughts and general attitude toward life will stay with us forever.

Andrzej Wróbel
Jolanta Zagrodzka