



Piotr Jaśkowski (1957 – 2011)

With deep sadness on January 6th, 2011 we heard about the death of Prof. Jaskowski, after a long illness. Prof. Jaskowski was a distinguished psychophysiological and cognitive psychologist with significant contributions in the field of cognitive neuroscience. His interdisciplinary views on the nature of science, his deep enthusiasm for research and his endless questions about the relationship between mind and brain will be sincerely missed.

Prof. Jaskowski was born in Bydgoszcz on May 18th, 1957. He obtained a Master's degree in Physics in 1980 from the Department of Physics and Mathematics of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. Only two years later, also in Poznan, he obtained a Ph.D. degree from the Department of Medicine from the former Medical Academy, and then his Habilitation degree in medical sciences in 1995. In 2002 he was awarded the title of Professor, and very recently (in 2007) he obtained an additional Habilitation degree in the field of human sciences from the Department of Philosophy from Jagiellonian University in Krakow. At the beginning of his scientific career, Prof. Jaskowski realized his scientific and teaching work at the Academy of Bydgoszcz (presently Kazimierz the Great University in Bydgoszcz), and starting in 2003 he worked in the Department of Psychology of the University of Finance and Management in Warsaw. In 2004 he was appointed as Vice-rector for scientific affairs, thus responsible for the scientific development of the relatively new Institution with the goal of fostering strong research programs and ultimately contributing to University's prestige. He visibly succeeded in this difficult task. Prof. Jaskowski was also Head of the Department of Cognitive Psychology where numerous research projects were realized by his research team and constantly fueled by his scientific creativity. These projects are presently continued, sadly, without his invaluable support. In the meantime, Prof. Jaskowski also worked as a researcher in the Medical University of Lubeck (Germany), and was funded by the von Humboldt Foundation and by the Deutsche Forschung Gemeinschaft, among other agencies. In this context he conducted research projects with collaborators which resulted in several publications in high-ranked journals in the field.

The scientific interests of Prof. Jaskowski were the brain mechanisms underlying subliminal perception, attention and hemispheric asymmetry, consciousness, and the link between perception and action. His research concerned also the neurobiological underpinnings of dyslexia and face perception. Prof. Jaskowski was extremely knowledgeable in these domains and was a specialist in techniques used in cognitive neuroscience (mostly evoked potentials); his opinion in this respect was highly valued in Poland and abroad. He possessed extensive knowledge not only in psychology but also in physics, biology and other sciences. This is witnessed by several collaborations with researchers from different countries in Europe and by more than 100 publications (60 in international journals from the renowned „Philadelphia list”). Some of them appeared also in *Acta Neurobiologiae Experimentalis*, when (from 2007 to 2010) he was a member of the Editorial Board.

Prof. Jaskowski's research was supported by several research grants, some of them financed by the European Commission. He was keen to carry out projects apparently difficult to realize, but he always accepted the challenge to „attack” important scientific questions. He was a brave scientist, in a very positive sense; he did not fear

difficult questions on the way to understanding the complexity of the human brain, but rather treated them as a source of inspiration and motivation for finding a solution. Prof. Jaskowski was very determined in his research activity, extremely hard-working and very ambitious and demanding about himself and the results of his work. In addition, he had an exceptional ability to gather around him people sharing the same passion for science; he was a teacher, a mentor, and a model for several young researchers. Prof. Jaskowski supervised eight Ph.D. students and several Master's students. Many of them are promising young scientists continuing their scientific career in Poland and abroad.

Prof. Jaskowski never treated himself as someone who knew everything in his field; he was very humble in this respect and he never stopped deepening his knowledge regarding new methods and content areas. This „need for knowledge” guided him to always learn more and think of new intriguing research questions. He was not afraid of saying „I don't know” if he was not aware of some new research findings or to ask in order to learn more. In particular, he was very keen in learning from his young collaborators and generously encouraged and supported their scientific activities (workshops, conferences, and scholarships). Prof. Jaskowski influenced many students, so many of them are now continuing to follow the path indicated by their former supervisor.

Prof. Jaskowski was always keen in sharing his knowledge, experience, and very helpful in proposing new projects and new solutions when problems arose. He was also enthusiastic in discussing the obtained results, and ready to hear new ideas and others' comments. He was persuaded that all comments, whether they came from students or senior researchers, were very valuable. He very much appreciated scientific curiosity. He firmly believed that there is no problem which cannot be solved, and thank to his eclectic knowledge and creativity he was typically able to find solutions to the most difficult problems.

Prof. Jaskowski was also an exceptional and dedicated lecturer who was able to present even the most complex topics in neuroscience in a clear and simple way. During the difficult time of his illness he wrote a textbook titled „Cognitive neuroscience. How the brain creates mind” (pol. „Neuronauka poznawcza. Jak mózg tworzy umysł”), a reference book mostly aimed at students interested in this domain. It was extremely important for him to transfer knowledge to students and to the members of his research team. To this aim he organized scientific camps where students could learn methods for data analysis, attend lectures, and discuss results and theories. Moreover, he was very active in seeking funding opportunities for the development of his research team and for the methodological advance of the laboratory. The high scientific status of Prof. Jaskowski, evident for all his students and collaborators, was confirmed by the several research grants which he received, and by awards (e.g., the Prof. Wanda Budohoska award by the Polish Psychological Association for the best research work in the field of neuropsychology and psychophysiology titled “*How the self controls its “automatic pilot” when processing subliminal information*” published in Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience).

Until almost the last days of his intense life, he worked with passion and dedication, read the last publications in the field, developed thoughts for the next studies, and discussed with doctoral students. We will utterly miss his creative ideas, the inspiring and spirited discussions, the encouraging and thoughtful advice, his playful humor, and his ability to transmit scientific passion to others. Poland lost a distinguished scholar. The students and associated faculty in our department lost a reference, a supervisor, and a friend.

Małgorzata Gut
Simone Dalla Bella

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More papers of Prof. Jaśkowski to be find on his home-page (in Polish): <http://cogn.vizja.pl/people/piotrjaskowski.htm>