



ELIOT STELLAR (1919-1993)

We mourn with deep sorrow the death of Professor Eliot Stellar, a great scientist and a great Man. He was an ardent, devoted friend of the Nencki Institute, of Poland, of the whole Mankind.

He spent over half a century on research in neurophysiology.

Beginning from his very first paper "Cortical localization of symbolic processes in the rat", Professor Stellar attempted to uncover the physiological brain processes regulating behaviour. His research was mainly concentrated on the problems of motivation, he was also interested, however, in learning and memory. In 1954 he published a classic paper "The physiology of motivation" which, for the first time, clearly identified the hypothalamus as the brain centre for motivated behaviour. This article was one of those rare overviews that set the tone of research for many future years. Largely because of Stellar, the 1950s became "the age of the hypothalamus" in physiological psychology. After thirty years of studies he summarized, in a sense, his ideas and knowledge concerning motivational mechanisms in his last excellent book "The neurobiology of motivation and reward", published together with his son, also a neurophysiologist.

Much of Professor Stellar's recent research was devoted to develop objective methods for measuring hunger and food intake in humans, to investigate the nature of appetite and its relation to obesity. His papers are known as models of clarity and critical thinking. We had a pleasure to listen to several of his stimulating lectures and seminars at the Nencki Institute. As a real friend of our Institute, he visited

us many times, always eager to discuss scientific and not only scientific problems with his Polish colleagues at the Department of Neurophysiology. He was a member of editorial board of *Acta Neurobiologiae Experimentalis*. For years he had been cooperating on common scientific project with the Laboratory of Limbic System, helping and stimulating the new ideas. He played the main role in establishing permanent, lasting almost thirty years now, very friendly and fruitful relationships between the Nencki Institute and the Penn's Institute of Neurological Sciences. Over ten young people from the Department of Neurophysiology worked for the period of 1-2 years at the University of Pennsylvania, others paid shorter visits and presented their papers there. Also several American scientists from Penn worked in Nencki Institute, some of them for a year. Professor Stellar, always interested in the progress of Polish neuroscience, took part in many of our conferences, introducing to them the spirit of true science and joy of life. In September 1992 he came to participate in the First International Conference of Polish Neuroscience Society, vigorous and full of energy as always. It is hard to believe that this was our last meeting. His joy of life, his great heart, his love for all human beings were outstanding.

During his visits in Poland he wanted to become familiar not only with our research but also with Polish culture and landscape. He visited Cracow, Zakopane and other parts of the country, enjoyed excursions in the mountains, museums, even dances. He had a rare ability to make friends everywhere.

Besides purely scientific work, Professor Stellar was also involved in several other important activities - for six years he was a provost of the University of Pennsylvania and the director of Penn's Institute of Neurological Sciences. Until the end of his very active life he served as a chairman of the Anatomy Department at the University of Pennsylvania, being appointed to this position again, in spite of the official retirement.

His passions and interests were not limited to neuroscience. Eliot Stellar was a great humanist and a real humanitarian. He was elected the president of the American Philosophical Society for two consecutive three-year terms. He was also a chairman of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Human Rights and this particular activity perhaps most completely defines his attitude to the fundamental human values, to dignity and worth of man. He used his talent for gentle persuasion to convince successfully US and foreign diplomats to personally and directly intervene on behalf of political prisoners of totalitarian regimes in many parts of the world. He was an enthusiastic friend of "Solidarity", helping Polish scientists in Poland and in America in many ways, especially during the martial law time.

On the occasion of 75 Anniversary of The Nencki Institute, in December 1993, Professor Eliot Stellar has been honoured with the Copernicus Medal, the greatest Polish award for the foreign scientists. Eliot Stellar was a man whose distinguished work and unique personality, love for life and people, will always be remembered. His death is a great loss for brain research world and for all of his friends and pupils.