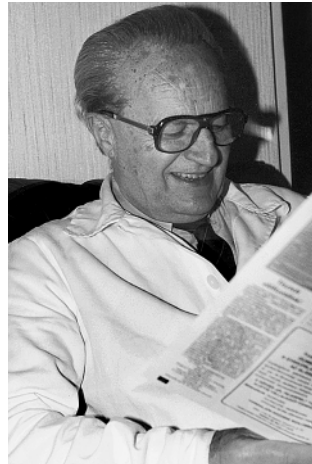


A SHORT RETROSPECTION

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As years go by, I constantly refrain myself from personal recollections of my memories, even from writing the memoirs of my scientific career. This abstinence may have several reasons and I hope that time will come for analysing these motives. But at present, without going back to the details of my curriculum vitae, a benevolent and generous pressure has been put on me. Namely, the Editor-in-Chief of *Acta Biologica Hungarica*, my good Friend Professor János Salánki has asked me to give at least a draft of the main periods of my biography for the volume dedicated to my birthday. I must confess, that at present I don't have the slightest idea about the character and the dimensions of the volume, further I don't possess any information so far who will be the contributors to that volume. Very likely it will be a complete surprise for me! But, of course, I could not turn down János Salánki's kind invitation! Consequently, in making an attempt to construct a large scale sketch of my professional track, I try below to give the broad outlines of four phases of that career.

First period (1922–1944). Childhood, schools, maturation

As in the life of every person, my birthplace and social circumstances have determined considerably my formative years. *Nagyvárad (Oradea)* in the year of my birth (1922) happened to be a Hungarian city newly annexed to Romania, with completely preserved Austro-Hungarian cultural life, a vivid town of intensive Central European culture. Living at present and since many-many years already in Budapest, we have preserved with my Wife, Katalin, who was born similarly in that city, a good piece of nostalgia towards our native town. We visit regularly, at least once a year

Nagyvárad, realizing again and again the imperishable past: the survival of old times, the still emerging Central European atmosphere of the settlement. Despite the multiple political regimes and cultural changes in the last Century, Nagyvárad had remained invariably what it was: a typical multi-cultural, many-coloured city! During my childhood the town happened to be an almost purely Hungarian speaking settlement, my mother-tongue being also Hungarian. The majority of the grown-up and elderly population spoke also German, as a heritage of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. When I went to school, the prescribed compulsory language had been the Romanian in the whole elementary and secondary educational system. The lingual influence of new Romanian regime seemed to be quite powerful, all the more so since it brought along some French cultural influence. Consequently I was brought up in a rather pluri-lingual environment.

I was raised in a lower middle-class family. My father, a goldsmith, had a small watchmaker and jeweller shop in my native town. Neither he nor my mother were well-schooled people, but they insisted to have a small library at home, they regularly had bought books and new journals. We had to study with my younger brother extra foreign languages and even had to take some piano- and violin-lessons. During our twelve years of elementary and secondary school education we have had a rather broad companionship, mostly boys and girls with high level of intellectual curiosity. Some of these early fellows remained our good friends up to the present days! The Romanian school system in the thirties and forties of the last Century had applied entirely the French model of those times: large scale scientific and cultural choice, demanding records of the students, strict discipline (e.g. uniforms for everybody!), etc. After my final examination in the Romanian secondary school (1940) Nagyvárad was annexed again to Hungary and I suddenly had moved to Budapest, where I had several close relatives. The subsequent four years (1940–44) under Hungarian regime, which I passed first in Budapest (simultaneously as a watchmaker and as a university student) and later enrolled in the Hungarian Army, appear now to me as a very hard, severe, but highly educative and formative period! These four years were full of personal adventures, shocking phenomena, even tragedies and extraordinary experiences, but all these events fall far beyond the framework of such a brief professional retrospection. The turning point of these initial 22 years of my curriculum vitae had been undoubtedly the month of October 1944, when the Second World War came to an end for me. Transsylvania was liberated by the Red Army, the normal university life had restarted in Kolozsvár (Cluj), where I had the possibility to enroll at the Medical School of the Bolyai University in December 1944.

Second period (1944–65). Medicine, brain research

I look back on my medical education (1944–49) in Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely and finally in Budapest as on a demanding, meticulous, conservative, but suggestive training with excellent professors not only in Budapest, but also in Transsylvania. No wonder that my first three years at the Bolyai University had been unambiguously

recognized by the Budapest Medical School authorities, where I had obtained my MD degree in 1949.

I had started my research attempts in Physiology as medical student way back in Transsylvania, my first paper appeared in 1947 in the local scientific journal. After graduation I entered the Department of Physiology of the Budapest Medical School in 1950. I remained in that prestigious Laboratory for a determinatively long period of time: altogether for 17 years. But there was a considerable interruption: in 1952, without a break in my appointment in Budapest, a postgraduate research fellowship (aspiranture) was offered to me in the then famous Pavlovian Institute in Koltushi (Soviet Union). That triennial (1952–55) scholarship in the worldwide respected Russian workshop happened to be of decisive importance in my career. After my return to Budapest in my mother Laboratory in 1955 I managed to organize a Psychophysiological and Behavioral Research Group. This Group is still successfully functioning since almost half a Century: first in the Medical School and since 1966 up to the present in the framework of the Eötvös University.

Needless to emphasize that the above, more than twenty years long “medical” period of my professional track had irreversibly determined the later years, when I had abandoned the Medical School.

Third period (1966–1992).

Comparative Physiology: teaching and research in a new Department

The month of August 1966 had been another landmark in my personal scientific story. After long negotiations I was voted, appointed and invited by the Council of the non-medical main University in Budapest, the Eötvös Loránd as full Professor and simultaneously I was asked to organize a new Chair. This new Department, named Comparative Physiology, had merged the whole Psychophysiology Research Group and some earlier co-workers from the Medical School. Further fresh finalists from the Eötvös University were appointed.

Actually the years which followed, practically the entire last third of the 20th Century had represented the apex of my scientific lifespan. I succeeded to organize several new Laboratories from neuronal cell culture, through mammalian electrophysiology up to human psychophysiology and behavior. The main idea and philosophy behind these 4–5 separate teams had been the complex, many-sided investigation from the elementary physiological events of learning up to the borderline phenomena of consciousness. The initial stage of this period had been characterized by the publication of my monograph *Interoception and Behaviour. An Experimental Study* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967). The book, unexpectedly for me, happened to be a success, both in Europe and on the American Continent (USA, Mexico). A considerable number of other prestigious publications had reflected the research efforts of our Department in those years. In addition to our very active research initiatives we took leading roles in the organization of several international congresses and symposia. Among these the 28th IUPS Congress in 1980 and the 2nd IBRO World

Congress in 1987, both in Budapest, were the most remarkable. Both these huge events and many more other conferences resulted in numerous up-to-date proceeding volumes and collected studies. Vigorous research and powerful international collaboration: these were my priorities in the seventies and the eighties enriched by fruitful study tours in the United States, Mexico, Soviet Union, France, Belgium, Germany, etc.

A sizeable proportion of my intellectual effort in all these years had been teaching and education in Physiology, Brain Research and Behavioral Sciences. In the course of my active professorship I happened to be the author, co-author and editor of several textbooks of Physiology for medical, biology- and psychology students. On the basis of these books I constantly lectured, and still lecture up to the present in the framework of under- and postgraduate courses. My vocation in educational problems manifested itself also in the fact that during 6 years (1972–78) I was elected Rector (Vice-Chancellor) of my University and during 12 years (1978–1990) President of the Society for Dissemination of Science (T.I.T.).

Fourth period (1992–2002). A vivid retirement

Since ten years I am officially retired from my University. But according to the conventions and habits, bearing the title of “emeritus professor”, I continue unceasingly my several activities at the Department, at the Academy, and at the Hungarian Pedagogical Society where I am re-elected President since 1994. Without going into details as far as my life in the recent years is concerned, I would like to highlight the completion and publication of two books in this last period, which summarize in certain respect my main intellectual efforts and leading ideas. The first of these volumes, written in English and published in New York in 1998 by *Plenum Press (Visceral Perception. Understanding Internal Cognition)* summarizes my endeavours and results in the research field of borderline internal feelings, the visceral perceptive phenomena. This monograph was based on many years of laboratory and clinical investigation of my team. The second book, published not long ago in Budapest in Hungarian, is a popular one. It is a collection of 25 studies, interviews and essays already issued earlier in several Hungarian periodicals. Its title: *The right and the back side of the human mind (Az emberi elme színe és fonákja, OKKER, Budapest, 2002)* reflects my views about science and pseudo-science, about the importance of brain research and psychophysiology in rational thinking and cognition.

Summing up, I must confess here my hope that this “nutshell” retrospection will be instrumental in writing a real and detailed memoir in the years to come, provided my state of health renders it possible.