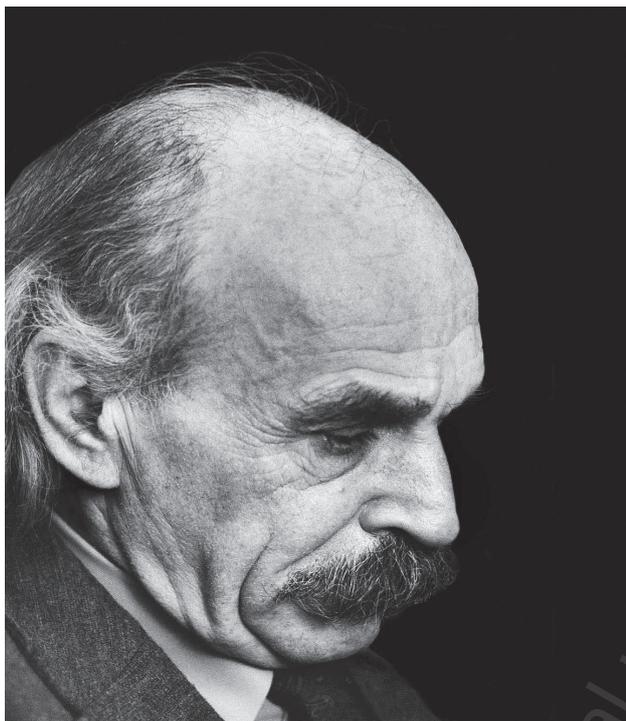


MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

To Professor Władysław J.H. Kunicki-Goldfinger (1916–1995)



This commemoration celebrates the birth one hundred years ago, on February 13, 1916, of Prof. Władysław J.H. Kunicki-Goldfinger. He was to play roles as an outstanding microbiologist, geneticist, humanist and activist. The Professor graduated from the Jagiellonian University, where, still a student, he worked in the Division of Bacteriology in the Department of Agriculture.

In 1934, Władysław J.H. Kunicki-Goldfinger enrolled in the Department of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University, where he studied biology. He completed his master's degree dissertation in veterinary microbiology under the direction of Dr. Stanisław Śnieszko, the Director of the Independent Division of Microbiology in the Department. After completing course work, he received a master's degree in philosophy in the field of biology, the focus of his later scientific interests.

Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger's research career in the Department of Agricultural Microbiology was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. He was arrested in Lvov and sent to the Archangielsk Governorate, where initially he performed menial labor, then

became a bacteriologist in a camp hospital. After leaving the camp, he enlisted in the Polish Army, organized by Władysław Anders in the Soviet Union, where Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger served in a medical unit which took him throughout the entire theatre of warfare. He returned to Poland in 1947. Prof. Józef Parnas employed him in the Veterinary Department at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, where he received his Ph.D. (1948) and, 2 years later, his post-doctoral degree.

In 1950, at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, he organized the Department of General Microbiology and became an associate professor. In 1955, he left the leadership of that Department to Prof. Zbigniew Lorkiewicz and moved with several of his coworkers to Wrocław, where he succeeded Prof. Helena Krzymieniewska in teaching microbiology in the Department of Plant Physiology. In 1957, he founded the Department of General Microbiology at the Institute of Botany of Wrocław University, leading that Department in 1957–1961. He also organized and led the Laboratory of Bacterial Genetics at the L. Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapies; this was the first Laboratory of this kind in Poland.

In 1960, Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger, with several of his students and colleagues, left Wrocław for Warsaw. In the following year, he founded the Department of General Microbiology there, the first at Warsaw University, the precursor of the current Institute of Microbiology. A number of groups interested in basic research in microbial genetics, virology, bacterial physiology, immunology and applied microbiology originated in the Institute under his direction. Some of them later evolved into independent laboratories and departments.

Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger authored or co-authored approximately 200 publications in various areas of microbiology, in general biology, in history of science and in philosophy of natural science. Particularly noteworthy is the cycle of 23 publications in bacterial genetics which were published under one title, *Mechanisms of Bacterial Conjugation and Recombination*.

The Professor also authored twelve books, including an extraordinary university textbook *Life of Bacteria* which went through the remarkable number of seven

editions. This textbook, brilliantly written with excellent, witty illustrations by Szymon Kobyliński, was used by generations of students.

No less important are the books on philosophy of natural science. Among them, the best known are: *Heredity and the Future – Thoughts on Molecular Biology, Evolution and Humans, In Search of Possibilities*, and the last one, *From Nowhere to Nowhere*, in which the author rendered difficult issues accessible. His profound interest in the philosophy of natural science found expression in the seminars entitled Discussions on Evolutionary and Theoretical Biology, which he organized at the Institute of Microbiology and which promoted an exchange of ideas among participants of different points of view. The Professor was also an active member of the Philosophy of Science Division of the Polish Society of Philosophy and of the Evolutionary and Theoretical Biology Committee at the Polish Academy of Sciences. In 1965, Professor Kunicki-Goldfinger became a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and in 1980 a full member.

In 1952, Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger together with Prof. Jadwiga Marszewska-Zięmięcka, founded the first Polish scientific journal devoted strictly to microbiology – *Acta Microbiologica Polonica* – and served as its editor-in-chief for many years. The journal is being published to this day under the title of the *Polish Journal of Microbiology*.

In addition to scientific research and teaching, Professor Kunicki-Goldfinger was actively involved in the community at large. He participated in the so-called

Flying University, which later became the Society for Studies in Humanities and Economics. In 1979, this Society established a Research Fund, under the direction of Professor Kunicki-Goldfinger, to provide aid to continue their academic efforts for students and researchers who had suffered hardships for their social activism. The Professor was one of the organizers of the Society for the Support and Promotion of Science; he also collaborated with the Committee for the Defense of Workers. On December 13, 1981 (the date of the imposition of marshal law), for these activities and his involvement in the Solidarity underground, he became the only full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences to be detained. Later still, the Professor was a member of the Lech Wałęsa's Citizen Committee, and in 1989 he participated in the "round table" negotiations in the Science and Education Section.

Later, in recognition of his contribution to the establishment of dynamic higher education bodies in the field of microbiology across Poland, Prof. Kunicki-Goldfinger received honorary doctorates from the University of Wrocław and from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University of Lublin.

We, his senior students at the University of Warsaw, wish to remember our Teacher and Master of so many years who devoted his exemplary life to fighting for good science and for justice. He is an icon for us to follow.

Students of the Professor
at the Institute of Microbiology
in the Department of Biology, University of Warsaw

