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PROFESSOR PIOTR FRANCUZ (1960–2020)



Professor Piotr Francuz was a Polish cognitive psychologist, a respected lecturer and scientist, and our mentor. He was born on 2 October 1960 in Bielsko-

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Biała and died prematurely at the age of 60 on November 14, 2020 in Tomaszów Lubelski. Piotr Francuz received his undergraduate education and further academic degrees at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, where he worked for the rest of his life, contributing significantly to its development. He was head of the Department of Experimental Psychology and founder of the Perception and Cognition Lab. This article is the tribute of his collaborators summarizing the main lines of his research and academic activities.

We received the news of Piotr's death with disbelief and great sadness. Just over a month earlier we could see Piotr riding an electric scooter in the basement of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), where our lab is located. A memorial service with His Magnificence Rector and the University Senate was held on November 20, 2020, was held at the KUL Academic Church. Next day, a funeral service took place in Krężnica Jara near Lublin where he lived. The family, wife with four adult children, friends, students, and colleagues, including professors and doctors from KUL and other universities, as well as representatives of numerous scientific and non-scientific centers, paid their last respects to Piotr.

Piotr completed his master's studies in 1984 and doctoral studies in 1990. Then he was hired at our alma mater as an assistant to Professor Zdzisław Chlewiński, the supervisor of his doctoral dissertation on the functions of quantitative and qualitative characteristics in the categorization of objects. Piotr published his doctoral thesis as a book with the same title (Francuz, 1991).

From 2003, he headed the KUL's Department of Experimental Psychology. He supervised twelve PhDs, including ours. The last doctoral defense took place less than a month after we said goodbye to Piotr (at the time of writing, another doctoral dissertation is awaiting the reviewers' assessments; two of the three doctoral dissertations left are already at the stage of advanced research). All the doctoral dissertations supervised by Piotr were based on innovative research financed by grants from the National Science Centre (NCN, Poland), or, before 2011, by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Most of the doctoral research was carried out in the Perception and Cognition Lab (previously called the Psychoneurophysiological Laboratory) that he created.

Piotr, we, his co-workers, including Dr. Paweł Augustynowicz and Dr. Magda Szubielska, organized the official opening of the laboratory on November 24, 2008. Piotr's death came ten days before its twelfth anniversary. Thanks to the grant for equipment investment (KBN No. 4679/IA/187/2004) that Piotr managed to obtain, the Perception and Cognition Lab was fully equipped when it opened. It consisted of a room adapted for individual research, spaces for group

studies, and a common room. The laboratory was fully adapted for neuropsychophysiological research, including electroencephalography (EEG) and eye trackers. Since then, thanks to Piotr's efforts, the Perception and Cognition Lab has been expanded by adding two more rooms and additional research equipment. Throughout his scientific work, Piotr was the manager, promoter, and principal investigator for over twenty grants. His last grant was devoted to the maintenance of special research devices (SPUB), as part of the Perception and Cognition Lab (2018–2020).

Our lab is a tangible proof of Piotr's exceptional scientific passion and resilience. During its development, Piotr was able to use one of his many talents. He was a keen architect and builder, and originally designed his own house and its surroundings. Anyone lucky enough to be invited to his annual June barbecue could admire his work up close. He often said that DIY was what helped him relax. In recent years, he often spent time working in his garden, where he accompanied his son Bernard (Benek is now 24 years, has cerebral palsy and a very cheerful disposition).

Piotr was especially scientifically prolific between 2012 and 2020. During that time he co-authored over fifty articles published mainly with our team from the Department of Experimental Psychology of KUL in journals listed in the Journal Citation Report (JCR). In 2013 Piotr published his last, award-winning book titled *Imagia: w kierunku neurokognitywnej teorii obrazu* [Imagia. Towards a neurocognitive image theory] (2013). In the preface to his book (also available online, see <https://afterimagia.pl>), Piotr wrote that “studies on the neuroscientific foundations of image perception are the result of my two most significant interests. On the one hand, these are professional interests in perception, especially in visual perception, and on the other, hobby interests in art” (Francuz, 2013, p. 12).

Piotr's interests gave rise to the idea of studying the psychological and neurophysiological determinants of aesthetic judgments with a project funded under the NCN Opus 6 grant carried out in 2014–2018. The research was conducted in co-operation with our Department of Experimental Psychology and the KUL's Department of Personality Psychology, headed by his long-time friend Professor Piotr Oleś. As part of the research, it was possible to capture how the brain reactions of experts and non-experts in the field of art differ when looking at fragments of paintings assessed as beautiful and non-beautiful (Fudali-Czyż et al., 2018). For this purpose, we used the method of eye fixation-related potentials (EFRP) available in the Perception and Cognition Lab since 2009 (see Fudali-Czyż et al. 2014). Other studies were devoted to personal meanings inspired

by the beauty of paintings (Chmielnicka-Kuter et al., in press) and the effect of the painting's beauty on eye movements (Jankowski et al., 2020).

Almost in parallel with the Opus 6 grant, Piotr led another large NCN Opus 5 grant in 2013–2018. Some studies were done in co-operation with the Department of Experimental Psychology and the Military Institute of Aviation Medicine (WIML) in Warsaw on the Gyro-IPT spatial disorientation simulator, looking at oculomotor and behavioral indicators of spatial disorientation in military pilots and trainees (Bałaj et al., 2019; Lewkowicz et al., 2018; Stróżak et al., 2018). Experiments were carried out also at the Perception and Cognition Lab on event-related potentials (ERP) during perceptual tasks performed in the state of vection (the illusion of one's body movement) (Stróżak et al., 2016, 2019).

Piotr's scientific and organizational activity was not limited to the Department of Experimental Psychology. From 2012 to 2018 he served as Director of the Institute of Psychology at KUL. During that time, he made attempts to increase the number of KUL articles published in international scientific journals. He inspired and motivated all employees to write high-standard papers and publish them in such journals. For this reason, in 2013 he was one of the originators of the Joseph Sidowski Award, which was granted to employees and PhD students at the Institute of Psychology for publications in journals included in the JCR list. In 2015, after obtaining the title of professor, Piotr became a member of the Award Jury. From 2015, he was a member of the Committee on Psychological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences and from 2017 also the Holy See's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO). Between 2011 and 2019, Piotr was a member of the Expert Support Team of the National Science Centre in the area of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. He often chaired the Team and evaluated competition applications. He was a member of the scientific committee of the Military Institute of Aviation Medicine and the editorial committees of *Polish Journal of Aviation Medicine and Psychology* (from 2012), *European Journal of Communication* (from 2008), and *Annals of Psychology* (from 2006).

From the early years of his scientific career, Piotr was interested in social communication and audio-visual media. He combined these interests with activities for the Lublin region. From 2006 he was a chairman of the Council of the Lublin Academic Community Consortium for the Information Society. From 1995 Piotr served as head of the Centre for Psychological Analyses of Social Communication. In the 1990s, he ran several research projects and workshops in co-operation with the Polish national TV broadcaster (Telewizja Polska, TVP) and the regional Polish radio station (Radio Lublin). In 2001, due to his son

Bernard's condition, Piotr became president of the Association of Families of Children with Brain Injuries in Lublin.

Piotr was also involved in the popularization of science, especially neuroscience and cognitive psychology. In 2005–2007, for example, he co-organized the Lublin Science Festival. From 2006 to 2007 he was a member of the program council of the “Lublin—City of Knowledge” project. Piotr also popularized science in his two most known books. The first is an academic textbook for learning statistics, *Liczby nie wiedzą skąd pochodzą. Przewodnik po metodologii i statystyce nie tylko dla psychologów* [Numbers Do Not Know Where They Come From. A Guide to Methodology and Statistics Not Only for Psychologists] which he wrote with Robert Mackiewicz (2005, 2007). The other one is *Imagia* (2013) mentioned above. Both books are popular among students of psychology and cognitive science. Both are very detailed but accessible to everyone. In 2014, *Imagia* was awarded the Theophrastus Award for the best psychological scientific book published in 2013. In 2016, *Imagia* earned him the Władysław Witwicki Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Psychology, conferred by the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The Polish authorities recognized Piotr's research, educational and organizational work. The Polish President awarded him the Knight's Cross of Polonia Restituta (2008) and the Gold Medal for Long Service (2019). In 2014, he received the Medal of the Commission of National Education for special services for education.

Piotr Francuz made an academic career during which he received invitations from many foreign universities, e.g., the Gordon College of Education, Cornell University, Universidad Central del Ecuador, Vanderbilt University, Purdue University, and the University of London. During these trips, he was not only interested in acquiring knowledge connected with psychology or neuroscience, but also in the people, local history, culture, and environment. He would take many photos on such occasions, and after every trip Piotr presented them during special Christmas meetings of the Department of Experimental Psychology. He told long and exciting stories about what he had seen and experienced. This year, the Christmas meeting was cancelled, and we will no longer hear these stories from Piotr, our professor and friend. His premature death is an irretrievable loss not only for his family and friends but also for Polish and international psychology.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I wish to acknowledge Piotr Francuz's important contributions to *Annals of Psychology*, including his service for many years as Executive Editor.

Wacław Bąk

Editor-in-Chief of *Roczniki Psychologiczne/Annals of Psychology*

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