



WIESŁAW LANG

(1928 – 2012)

The society of Polish lawyers has suffered a severe loss recently. On December 31, 2012, Wiesław Lang died in Toruń. He was one of the most prominent representatives of the Polish theory and philosophy of law, professor of the Faculty of Law and Administration at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and long-time head of the Department of Theory of Law and State at that university. He was also a member of the Legal Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences and editor of "Comparative Law Review", published at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń since 1989.

The Professor was an exceptional man, with broad research interests and great personal and professional culture. He perceived not only the current, but also the perspective interests of academic society. The Professor's works won him the respect and admiration not only of Polish, but also of foreign representatives of jurisprudence. Over the years he successfully headed the "Comparative Law Review" magazine. We therefore feel bound to feature the figure of the great and distinguished professor, who contributed greatly to the development of scientific cooperation between the NCU Law Faculty and the world's leading centres of the theory and philosophy of law.

He was born on July 13, 1928 in Lviv into an intellectual family. In 1947 he started studying law at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. In the course of his studies he also attended classes at the Faculty of Philosophy, which had a considerable impact on the Professor's future research interests. After graduating in 1951 he was employed as a junior research assistant in the Department of State Law at the Jagiellonian University. At the same time he began participating in the seminars of eminent philosopher and legal theorist Professor Jerzy Lande, who had been a student of Professor Leon Petrażycki, the creator of the widely known psychological concept of law. The seminar was attended by many of the later prominent Polish specialists in the theory, philosophy, and sociology of law, including M. Borucka-Arctowa, J. Wróblewski and A. Podgórecki.

In 1953 the Professor joined the Department of the Theory of Law at the Jagiellonian University. In 1958 he received his doctorate for his thesis *The application of the law*, prepared under the direction of Professor Kazimierz Opalek. The basis for his habilitation colloquium at the Law Faculty of the Jagiellonian University in 1964 was a dissertation on the structure of legal control in the Polish communist state. This was a pioneering work and a highly appreciated attempt to apply cybernetic notional apparatus to the study of the structure of state apparatus. It won second prize in the prestigious "State and Law" magazine for the best post-doctoral work in Poland for the year 1965.

In 1965 he moved to Toruń, where for many years he was associated with the Faculty of Law at the Nicolaus Copernicus University. He was the founder of the Theory of State and Law Department there, which he headed for many years. In 1975 he was awarded the title of associate professor and in 1987 the title of full professor. Over the years he held a number of various organizational posts at the Faculty of Law and Administration, including the Dean's chair and the post of Director of the Legal-Constitutional Institute. He also actively worked outside the university. Starting from 1966 he was part of the Legal Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences; in 1974 he was made a member of the Legislative Council by the Prime Minister; between 1978 - 1986 he was part of the editorial office of "State and Law" magazine and a member of the Central Commission for Scientific Titles and Degrees.

The Professor's research interests were extremely rich and diverse. He focused mainly on the following issues: 1) the validity of law, legal norm, legal control 2) secularism and morality, 3) basic problems of the theory of state and law, 4) law and morality, the axiology of law in the context of law-making, 5) legal philosophy in the USA, 6) legal aspects of human procreation and the moral and legal status of nasciturus, 7) human rights, individual rights, and the multicentrism of European law.

The theory and philosophy of law were his passions in life, but in his broad interdisciplinary research he dealt with other legal disciplines, such as constitutional law, human rights, civil law, criminal law, international law, European law, and comparative law. The Professor was also absorbed by philosophical, sociological, ethical, bioethical, political, and linguistical issues.

He often expressed his philosophical reflections on the human condition. Among the ancient philosophers he especially appreciated Epicurus, whom he frequently quoted saying, that “death does not concern us, because as long as we exist, death is not here. And when it does come, we no longer exist”.

The Professor had a total of more than 100 publications of scientific papers, to his name. Many of them were awarded prizes. In 1984 his *Social Justice and Civil Disobedience in U.S. Political Doctrine* (co-authored with J. Wróblewski) was awarded second prize by the Minister of Science and Higher Education. In 1989 he received the special prize of the Polish Academy of Sciences for one of his most popular works *Law and Morality*, which also won the award of the Minister of Science and Higher Education in 1990. In 1993 he received a special award from the International Society for Universalism for his work *Universalism in ethics, morality, and law*, and in 1996 received first degree team award from the Minister of Science and Higher Education for a monograph entitled: *Contemporary Philosophy and Theory of Law in the United States* (written together with prof. J. Wróblewski). He was also the author of two academic textbooks, and a co-author of a textbook for Theory of State and Law, which won the first degree team prize of the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

The Professor also published abroad, mainly in English, and over the years maintained numerous international scientific contacts. He was a member of many scientific societies, a scholar and lecturer in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Italy, and Denmark.

He lectured at a number of European and non-European universities, including such far away locations as Sydney and Bangkok. He was a member of the advisory board of the German scientific journal “Archiv für Rechts-und Sozialphilosophie”, as well as an active participant in the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy (IVR) Congresses. He delivered his presentations at congresses in Sydney-Canberra (1977), Mexico (1982), Athens (1985), Tübingen (1991), Bologna (1995), Buenos Aires-La Plata (1997). Finally, he participated in the IVR Congress in his beloved Cracow in 2007.

In 1998 he retired, but still remained professionally active. He published articles and was co-author and editor of the monographic work entitled *Legal aspects of human procreation*, published in 2000.

He also continued to carry out educational work. As a retired professor he gave optional courses on the subject of the modern philosophy of law and led a masters seminar. In the years 2004 - 2009 he supervised the academic development of his last pupil, Dawid Bunikowski. He also taught at other universities. He was associated with the Paweł Włodkowic College in Płock, the College of Law and Diplomacy in Gdynia, and the College of Education and Administration in Poznań, where he headed his last, unfortunately unfinished research project *Application of Law in Poland*.

The Professor was an erudite, passionate role model for many students and academics. He was also a man of great personal culture, sensitive to human suffering, and always ready to kindly help others. In our memory the Professor will remain not only a great scholar, but a man, whose passing is a painful loss for us.

Marta Lang

Kazimierz Lubiński