



Nervecells, Transmitters and Behaviour



Study Week, 9-14 October 1978

R. Levi-Montalcini (ed)

Scripta Varia 45

Vatican City, 1980

pp. xix-679

Foreword

This Study Week on Neurobiology is the sixteenth organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and was held at its seat, the Casina Pio IV, in the beautiful Vatican Gardens. It comes at an appropriate moment when surprising new facts are described and new interpretations are given to some of the most important aspects of our biological knowledge. It is a blooming field wherein the nerve cells, transmitters and behaviour results of yesterday can easily be substituted by those of today, and may be reversed by those of tomorrow. The effervescence of this field of research can be seen in the diversity of approaches, methods and technical skill, presented during this 5-day Meeting. From the study of cells, some of them serving as special models for particular studies, to that of the specialisation in split and intact brain, a large road has been covered by the participants in the Study Week. Certainly, not all the problems, suggestions and answers have been focussed during our Meeting. Its purpose, however, was perfectly achieved and all the presentations show the importance of the new approaches and how much our knowledge on brain mechanisms has been extended to the molecular level. It is safe to say that during the previous Study Week on "Brain and Conscious Experience", held in 1964, also a land-mark in this field, we could have hoped that a more detailed scrutiny of nerve function could be expected, but it would be difficult to imagine the progress achieved in the recognition of the intimate nature of some of the ways by which nerve cells interact. Certainly, much has still to be done and new frontiers of research will become necessary. One may say, however, that this Study Week has repeated the success of the one held in 1964. This success is due to the tireless zeal and devotion with which our Academician Rita Levi-Montalcini, overcoming difficulties of all sorts, has dedicated herself to the task of organizing the Meeting and editing its Proceedings. Thanks to Rita Levi-Montalcini, whose discovery of the Nerve Growth Factor is a real cornerstone in the history of neurobiology and, I am sure, in that of embryonic development, our meeting surpassed all our expectations. Conveying to my colleague, the eminent Academician Rita Levi-Montalcini, the expression of my gratitude, I want to emphasize also in very warm terms how much we are indebted to Father Enrico di Rovasenda and Mrs. Michelle Porcelli Studer for all the help they have given to the success of the Study Week, before, during and after its realization. Finally, I also want to thank Mrs Gilda Massa for the transcription of all the discussion and Mr. Silvio Devoto for his technical assistance.

Carlos Chagas