



## IN MEMORIAM

Bernard Towers

1922 — 2001

Professor of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, Emeritus  
Los Angeles

Physician, anatomist, embryologist, biomedical ethicist, and professor of psychiatry and biobehavioral sciences, Dr Bernard Towers made a lasting impact on the medical students and faculty during the 30 years he served at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine. Initially, Dr. Towers came to UCLA as professor of anatomy and pediatrics in 1971. Prior to that time he was a lecturer in anatomy and medicine and a fellow and tutor of Jesus College at the University of Cambridge in England.

Bernard was born in Preston, England where he received his early education. Awarded an Open University Scholarship in Classics, he studied at Liverpool University. There he was a member of council, then the executive committee, vice president and finally in 1945-46, president of the Guild of Undergraduates of his university. Upon completing his medical education he received the degrees of M.B., Ch.B. in 1947. The next two years were spent as a Lieutenant/ Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Upon leaving the British National Service, he received his first academic appointment as an assistant lecturer in anatomy at the University of Bristol for the year 1949-1950. In 1950 he moved to the University of Wales where for the next four years he was first an assistant lecturer and then lecturer in anatomy and histology.

Recognition of this early work at Wales led to his appointment in 1954 as lecturer in anatomy and in 1955 as a lecturer in medicine at the University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge, Bernard continued to follow his interests in embryology and especially in the development of the lungs, a research field he initiated in Wales. At this time he also began to write philosophic and editorial articles on evolution, medical education and ethical issues in medicine. Additionally, he became a truly superb lecturer and teacher in embryology, facts that brought him to our attention here at UCLA where a search was underway to select a professor of anatomy whose specialty was embryology. Dr. Towers had spent several short periods here on our faculty as a visiting professor in the late 1960s when his presentations impressed not only faculty in the Department of Anatomy but also others in the Department of Pediatrics. At Cambridge, Towers developed the concept of the "pneumon" as the functional unit of the lung which he compared to the nephron, considered the functional unit of the kidney.

At UCLA his first appointment was professor of anatomy and pediatrics. With then professor of pediatrics, Forrest H. Adams, Bernard's research in animal and human fetal development focused on the quantity of surfactant required by the prematurely born infant to assure survival. Parallel with these studies was his continuing stream of articles in medical ethics. Some of his titles at this time included the following: "The Right to Die"; "Foetus Experiments: a Scientist's View"; "Faith and Healing"; "Test Tube Creation" etc.

Professor Towers interest in philosophy, evolution and religion, and bioethics in medicine, law and human values were further broadened upon the development of the Program in Psychoneuroimmunology headed by Norman Cousins, the long time editor of the Saturday Review of Books in New York City who joined our faculty in the early 1980s. Towers initially convened and moderated the UCLA Medicine and Society Forum, the presentations of which were all videotaped. This Forum lasted 15 years and among the 125 topics presented were Orthodox and Holistic Medicine; "Why End a Human Life"; "Why We Should Not End a Human Life"; "When Is It Right To Use Organs From Anencephalic Newborns For Transplantation";

“Teaching of Medical Ethics To Medical Students”; “ Life Support For the Newborn: Is It Ever Right To Stop”.

In 1983 Dr. Towers’ interests in Psychoneuroimmunology led him away from his earlier interests in embryology and into psychiatry where he developed techniques in the mental imagery of disease states. His course in Body Mind Integration in Health and Disease was warmly received by medical students for many years. Bernard was honored by invitations to deliver many “named” lectureships. He was the Alpha Omega Alpha Visiting Professor and Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania in 1979, and he delivered the Aaron Brown Lecture and received the Aaron Brown Award at Tulane University in 1978. In London, England he was the Annual Teilhard Lecturer in 1981. At UCLA he gave the Lester Breslow Distinguished Lecture in the School of Public Health in 1985. This same year he was the Frank Norfleet Lecturer at the University Of Tennessee Medical School. In 1997 Dr. Towers received the Distinguished Service Award given by the UCLA Medical Alumni Association.

Dr. Towers was a prolific writer of original scientific and medical articles, editorials. He edited or co- edited 30 books, wrote 28 chapters in other books and authored three of his own books. Two of his books were on the philosopher Teilhard de Chardin and the third was called Naked Ape or Homo Sapiens?: A Reply to Desmond Morris, which was translated into three other languages. His total bibliography lists over 275 contributions.

Dr. Towers is survived by daughters Tiffany Towers, Marianne Powell, Celia Towers and Julie Tara. He will be missed not only by his family members, but also by the many faculty here at UCLA that had the pleasure of knowing him while he was living.

Carmine D. Clemente