

PUTZEYS, Paul (1897-1982)

Born: Tienen, 1897

Died: Heverlee (B), 1982

Because University of Leuven had to close down during WWI, Putzeys starts his studies of pharmacy at the later age of 21, with however possessing already a sound knowledge of chemistry. He graduates as a pharmacist with a thesis on the atomic mass of selenium, followed by a doctor's degree of chemistry. He obtains a scholarship at Harvard and a few years after his return to Leuven, he is appointed professor (1932). His further career is determined by two grants, one for the Carlsberg laboratories in Denmark and the other for the Institute of Physical Chemistry at Uppsala, Sweden. He familiarizes himself with the specific research techniques of proteins and meets Søren Sørensen, Kai Lindstrøm-Lang, Gilbert Adair, Theodore Svedberg and Kai Pedersen. The latter two have developed the ultracentrifuge and have discovered that each protein has a different molar mass. Arne Tiselius familiarizes Putzeys with the dependence of the electrophoretic mobility on the pH. In Leuven, Putzeys unconditionally opts for the chemistry of the proteins and confirms the results of Uppsala. Putzeys improves his technique which is faster, but yields only an average value of the molar mass and whose results are influenced by colorants, dirt and aggregates; this improvement is very useful in the study of hemoglobin. His further studies concern the electrophoresis and ionic strength of protein solutions. In the late sixties he carries out research on the influence of high pressure on the dissociation of proteins. Putzeys becomes in 1947 the founder of the Department of Biochemistry. Together with E.J. Bigwood, Christian de Duve, Marcel Florin, he is one of the founders of the Belgian Society of Biochemistry and is elected chairman for the period 1956-1958.

Bibl. : *“Professeur Paul Putzeys, Biochimiste des Protéines, 1897-1982”* by Dr. Gisèle Préaux and René Lontie, Laboratorium van Biochemie, KUL, Dekenstraat 6, B-3000 Leuven.