

BOOK REVIEW

RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES IN BIOCHEMISTRY. By E. Broda. Pp. x + 376 (including index). Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1960. Distributed by D. Van Nostrand Company, Ltd., London. 60s.

While application of radioactive isotopes is now commonplace in biochemical research, their intelligent use still demands a smattering of knowledge of the subject of nuclear physics. This book adequately meets the requirement. It is an excellent translation into English of the first German edition published in 1958. It is essentially a concise and scholarly review by a master of his subject rather than a practical manual and touches briefly on all aspects of isotopes of interest to the biochemist. Chapters 1-7 (68 pages) are concerned with general principles including the biology of radiations. Chapters 8 and 9 (57 pages) describe methods of measurement, and the remaining chapters 10-16 (196 pages) quote examples of the application of isotopes to biochemical problems, many of which are classical studies. Stable isotopes, while not treated in detail, are mentioned where appropriate. To assist the reader to devise approaches to specific problems there is an impressive collection of 3190 (not ca. 3700 as claimed) references and a good author and subject index totalling 45 pages.

Any short account of a wide subject can easily be criticised on the grounds of omission or brevity depending on the bias of the reader. Thus the 4 pages dealing with drugs are all too short for the reviewer who was left with the impression that too much attention was paid to the biology of heavy metals. There are few easily detectable typographical errors but some curiosities of terminology appear, for example, the "metabolism of radon" (page 1), "abio-synthesis" (pages 36 and 162) and "super heavy water" (page 139). The book is well produced, not too expensive and can be recommended as an introduction to isotopic methods on a broad basis.

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