## Book Reviews

**Piternick, L.K. (ed.): Richard Goldschmidt, Controversial Geneticist and Creative Biologist. A critical review of his contributions, with an introduction by Karl von Frisch. Experientia Supplementum Vol. 35. Basel, Boston, Stuttgart: Birkhäuser 1980. 154 pp., Hard bound sFr. 26,–.**

I met Richard Goldschmidt only once in my life, in 1954, at the Nineth International Congress of Genetics at Bellagio. As the elected president he gave the presidential address, entitled 'Different Philosophies of Genetics', in which he confronted his own physiological or dynamic concept of the gene with the statistical or static model. After the acclamation he directed a few friendly words towards me, but was soon surrounded by the genetic stars of that time. I remained impressed by his clear and critical, conscientious and outspoken manner of talking. Having read his popular book on 'Ascaris' as a freshman and his 'Understanding Heredity' later on, he represented to me the realization of a distinguished professor, one of the heroes in the history of genetics.

The book under review, although in some ways a critical review of Goldschmidt's life-work (1878-1958), is more an apotheosis of his contributions to biological knowledge of our time and the sketch of a 'biological gentleman'. Nearly half the volume comprises reprints of two crucial papers, published by Richard Benedict Goldschmidt in 1948 and 1949, as well as an important controversial paper of J. Seiler. The core of the volume, however, is a reprint of a contribution by Curt Stern from the Biographic Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences in 1967, which includes a complete list of Goldschmidt's papers. A very fine 'Introduction' by a former colleague, the Nobel-Laureat K. von Frisch provides reminiscences and insights of personal nature. The other contributions are not really critical reviews but articles which place Goldschmidt's work within the present corpus of knowledge.

Goldschmidt's provocative view of the evolution process (Carson, Sarich), the nature of the gene (Bakken), his concept of intersexuality (Allen) and sex determination (Littlefield and Bryant) are all discussed. An evaluation of Goldschmidt's work in the early twenties at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut at Berlin is given by E.W. Caspari, his impact on the Zoology Department at the University of California by R.M. Eakin.

Without any doubt, Richard Benedict Goldschmidt was one of the outstanding biologists of the first half of the 20th century. Through his lecturing and his many textbooks his influence went far beyond the wall of his laboratory. His biographic sketches 'The Golden Age of the Zoology' (1955) and 'In and Out of the Ivory Tower' (1960) gave an elegiac view on a sunken century. They are also flashbacks to the good old days when many scientists experienced a certain freedom which has now disappeared, even in our more democratic days. Goldschmidt's influence in genetics was profound. He created such terms as 'intersex' and 'phenocopy' which are now permanent additions to the technical language of genetics.

The outstanding merit of this book is that it demonstrates the many faceted creativity of Goldschmidt. 'Born with the eyes of an observer and trained rerum cognoscere causas I have been enabled by chance to live a life much more exciting than usually falls to the lot of a man who spends most of his time bent over a microscope, breeding cage, or culture bottle ... Perhaps this was not only a chance but the deep urge to look into all facts of life, learning and teaching, enjoying and fighting ... I have had the rare luck of one day sitting happily inside the ivory tower and another day just as happily participating in the turmoil of the world'.

H.F. Linskens, Nijmegen

## Announcements

### International Symposium on New Genetical Approaches to Crop Improvement

This meeting is to be held at Karachi, Pakistan, from 7th to 11th November 1981. The scientific programme will consist of both invited and volunteered papers and will cover such topics as mutagenesis, chromosome substitutions, somatic cell genetics, distant hybridization, selection theory, breeding for yield, genetic basis of diseases and pest resistance, quality characters in crops, breeding for stress conditions and relevance of molecular and biochemical mechanisms in crop improvement.

The proceedings of the symposium will be published.

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