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### Book Reviews

**Vogel, F.; Propping, P.: Ist unser Schicksal mitgeboren?** Moderne Vererbungsforschung und menschliche Psyche. Berlin: Severin und Siedler 1981. 368 pp., 60 figs. Hard bound DM 42,-.

The authors are rather competent to write a book on human behaviour genetics and have very well succeeded in doing so. Why do they give the book such an uninteresting title: Is our fate congenital? What fate? But the point to be made is: Are my doings hereditary? This marvelously interesting book concedes nothing either in the title nor in the text to potential lay-readers. You have to be a rather educated and stubborn reader to finish it. About 340 pages of clear expositions are quite a bit for a superficial lay-geneticist, thinking about his schizophrenic sister or his mother, who died from carcinoma of the breast at 48 years. The first example is discussed at length, but the second fate, if congenital, is missing.

In 17 chapters genetics and man's psyche are discussed and chapters 3 and 17 are the most exciting, giving some personal views on social darwinism (chapter 3), and a preview on a genetic blessing or curse (17). It is regrettable that socio-biology (Wilson a.o.) is not mentioned, nor newer biological viewpoints like those on cybernetical systems. The socio-

biological point of view would have raised discussions on the psychological, sociological, ethical, political and even philosophical implications of genetics. The cybernetical aspect would have made it clear, that at least in biological systems we have to deal with action and reaction in a reciprocal system and not with a simple cause and effect relation only.

There are many non-Germans who emotionally reject discussions by Germans on normal and ethical implications of human genetics in the past (social darwinism, racism) and the future. A cautious discussion of the burden of the knowledge of the future genetic fate of an individual and the reactions of the society to this knowledge ("good and bad fairy") belongs to the responsibility of the scientists. It is realistic and acceptable that individual scientists do so and it is not right to reject these views on past mistakes and crimes of fellow countrymen. Society has to come to grips with the predictability of individual genetic risks and interdisciplinary and international discussions are necessary to find solutions to the stigmatization and the insurance problems.

The present book gives a very good overview of human behaviour genetics and geneticists as well as non-geneticists should use it as a basis for interdisciplinary discussions.

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