

Book Reviews

Heredity, Evolution and Society

By I. Michael Lerner (Berkeley). W. H. Freeman and Co. San Francisco 1968. Bound volume with cover; 18 × 24 cm; XVIII + 308 pages, including numerous tables, graphs and illustrations. Price not indicated.

Our century is being the witness of a scientific explosion: it has been calculated that possibly over 90% of all scientists who ever lived are alive and work today in our present world. The number of US scientists is doubling every ten years. Over 100 000 scientific periodicals are being published, and practically all newspapers and magazines, as well as the radio-television, have their scientific survey. Scientific information—although frequently distorted—has become a good business for advertising agents and film producers. Scientific terms and expressions are more and more introduced in the common language.

The age of physics over, with World War II, the age of biology has followed, in the blinding light of what has been called "the biological bomb".

As a result, in our present society everyone suffers—in Professor Lerner's words—"an exposure to biological sciences".

The present textbook has in fact grown out of a course in genetics taught by the author to students in the humanities and arts. Therefore, the main goal and difficulty was probably to operate a careful selection of the facts which really had to be discussed, with special concern to their social implications. An effort was also made for the presentation of these facts to be as clear as possible, and their value be easily understandable.

The language used, the choice and arrangement of the illustrations and schemes, the segregation into extremely useful "boxes" of descriptive and tabular material, and the very careful editorial presentation—all play an im-

portant role in making this book highly successful.

Professor Lerner must be complimented for having succeeded in assembling a very large quantity of information, covering many different topics, stressing the social, political and psychological implications of the biological laws and principles underlying heredity and evolution.

And all this, in a way which makes this book be not only of interest to the cultured layman to whom it is primarily directed, but also precious for biological and medical students and scientists, who will certainly welcome it.

P. PARISI

The Genetics of Neurological Disorders

(Genetica dei Disturbi Neurologici)

Di R.T.C. Pratt. Collana «Oxford Monographs on Medical Genetics». Oxford University Press. London 1967. Volume di 17 × 25 cm; 310 pagine, bibliografia; indice. Prezzo 80s. (\$10.00 circa).

Il volume tratta della genetica della neuropatologia, suddividendo l'ampio materiale in vari capitoli per semplificare.

Sono trattate: le malformazioni congenite, le lipoidosi e le demielinizzazioni, l'atassia e la paraplegia spastica familiare, le atrofie spinali muscolari, la paralisi agitante, la demenza senile e presenile, le malattie dei nervi cranici e periferici e le sindromi sensoriali, le neoplasie, l'epilessia, gli errori del metabolismo intermedio, le malattie muscolari.

In un capitolo a parte sono inoltre raggruppate malattie varie che non hanno trovato diversa collocazione.

Le singole malattie sono trattate sinteticamente con brevi cenni anche storici e ampia documentazione bibliografica.

G. DEL PORTO