

Comments and Communications

The Accessibility of Knowledge

The enclosed is a copy of a letter just mailed to Professor W. Missiuro. This, I believe, is self-explanatory and it may be that you will wish to publish it in *SCIENCE*. I, at least, am greatly disturbed to see such evidence of growing chauvinism in science in some parts of the world and feel we scientists should be alert to express such concern.

ANCEL KEYS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
LABORATORY OF PHYSIOLOGICAL HYGIENE
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Professor W. Missiuro, Editor

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Zakład Fizjologii Człowieka

Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28

Warszawa, Poland

DEAR PROFESSOR MISSIURO:

I have received the first issue (Volume I) of *Acta Physiologica Polonica* and hasten to send good wishes to you and your associate editors in this new venture. I note that the work is well printed on good paper and presents altogether a pleasing appearance. All of this may be taken as another indication that Poland is indeed recovering from the destruction and chaos wrought by the war.

We are fortunate that Dr. Josef Brożek, Associate Professor here, reads Polish easily. I suppose that, outside of Poland and possibly Russia, there are scarcely twenty physiologists in the world who are expert in that language. Aside from the Latin title, your *Acta* is wholly in Polish, without even brief summaries of the articles in any other language.

The fact that Polish uses the Latin script makes it possible for me to discern, with some difficulty, that your first volume of the *Acta* is entirely devoted to the Russian physiologist I. P. Pavlov. What do your contributors have to say about Pavlov? Do they remind us that Pavlov's genius, like that of all great men of science, had no boundaries of nationality or language? Or is it now thought that Pavlov's contributions to knowledge may be called back, to be confined to the east of the Oder-Neisse Line?

By the same post that brought Volume I of your *Acta*, I received Number 34 (9, April, 1950) of *Endeavour*. On the first page (53) is this issue's Editorial, entitled "The Accessibility of Knowledge." Perhaps I should quote the first sentence: "The first task of a scientist entering a field of research is to master the facts already discovered by earlier workers and then to keep abreast of the discoveries of his contemporaries pursuing the same line." This is a large and difficult assignment at best; I wonder how we are to meet the problem created by publication wholly in a language which is unintelligible to the overwhelming majority of potential readers.

I am reminded also of a very recent article in *Chemical*

and *Engineering News* (28, 1369 [1950]) by Francis Boyer, who says: "The scientist must accept a social as well as a scientific duty. He cannot limit his responsibility to advancing knowledge; he is responsible, too, for its dissemination."

We scientists have had a long history of trouble with intercommunication. For centuries we tried to manage with Latin as our lingua franca; there were few of us then and the volume of our intercommunications was very small. In modern times the overwhelming majority of our scientific discoveries and theories have been published in English, French, and German, with Italian and Spanish as much less important alternates. Lately, some of us are thinking that we ought to learn Russian as well, but, as you know, it is difficult enough to learn modern science alone without the added burden of years of purely language study.

From the above you will understand that we greet your new *Acta* with mixed feelings. Although we wish every success to the progress of physiology in Poland and to the success of the *Acta*, we cannot help regretting that most of us will, because of the language limitation, be unable to follow your progress in the *Acta*.

With my personal good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

ANCEL KEYS, *Director*

Amylase Inhibition

A statement by Volker (*Science*, 112, 61 [1950]) that indole acetic acid, indole butyric acid, and indole propionic acid have antiamylytic ability requires additional comment. The antiamylytic ability of these auxins is due entirely to pH effect (Eyster, H. C. *Plant Physiol.*, 21, [1], 68 [1946]). The antiamylytic character of 2, 4, dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, triodobenzoic acid, naphthalene acetic acid, naphthoxyacetic acid, and nicotinic acid may also be due solely to pH effect. There may be *in vivo* inhibition of amylase that is not dependent upon pH effect; however, *in vitro* auxin retardation of diastase is correlated with pH.

H. C. EYSTER

The Charles F. Kettering Foundation
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Rhetorical Atrocity

Recent scientific literature (I hesitate to mention names) has repeatedly included the verb *to hypothecate*, evidently intended to mean *to make a hypothesis*. What possessed the author who first perpetrated this atrocity?

The correct, though phonetically awkward, verb is *to hypothesize*. If only our venerable authors, referees, and editors would condescend to consult a dictionary, they would learn, much to their amazement and disgrace, that *to hypothecate* means *to assume a mortgage!*

WOLF VISHNIAC

Department of Pharmacology
New York University Bellevue Medical Center