

In the introduction to the symposium, Sir James Gray stressed that most of our social and international problems stem from an uneven distribution of limited environmental resources within increasingly large populations. These are conditions which maintain the struggle for existence, and the symposium is mainly concerned with the biological side of this complex: the problems of population. Two of the four sessions were in fact devoted to discussions on demographic issues: one on population trends contributed by E. Grebenik, P. R. Cox, H. Gille, and J. M. Tanner, and the other on aspects of fertility control contributed by P. Sargent Florence, J. A. H. Waterhouse, M. Peberdy, Dorothy Morgan, A. S. Parkes, and Sir Julian Huxley. Both these sections are authoritative and up-to-date factual accounts of world-wide trends.

At the session under the Chairmanship of Sir Sydney Caine, devoted to social mobility and education, Michael Young and J. B. Gibson discussed social mobility in relation to fertility, while J. W. B. Douglas dealt with education and social movement. Both these contributions show the need for hard factual data on the major problem in this country today: differential IQs are no longer accepted as a self-evident cause of class differences. A more theoretical contribution by J. M. Thoday stressed the individual as opposed to the social aspects.

One session was strictly medical under the Chairmanship of L. S. Penrose. A contribution from K. Mather dealt with natural selection, and G. Montalenti discussed infectious diseases as selective agents. M. A. Ferguson-Smith dealt with chromosomal aberrations and J. A. Fraser Robert with some practical applications.

Although organic unity, this volume is welcome and not only for the standard of its material and presentation. It is announced as the first of a series of simposia to be arranged by the Eugenics Society. Presumably the Eugenics Society, which has not always been wise in its objectives and activities, has come to value dispassionate discussion above misguided propaganda.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has set itself the admirable task of organizing popular lectures planned 'to broaden the scientific horizon of the audience, and to communicate to them some of the excitement and inspiration of the scientific endeavor'. The book by Dobzhansky, based on lectures delivered in 1963 at Los Angeles and in 1964 at Minneapolis, shows that the task, though difficult, is not impossible, and it is good that a wider audience than that which attended these lectures can now enjoy them. The exposition is clear, and if for nothing else this book which consists essentially of four chapters with an epilogue, can be recommended as an excellent introduction to human biology. Following an account of the principles of heredity in which even the recent developments in molecular genetics are explained, there is a chapter on the variety of human nature: this turns away from egocentric views and emphasizes human diversity. An account of race stresses its biological insignificance despite the clamour in 'South Africa and in many places closer to home'. The fourth chapter is a particularly clear statement on Man's genetic load and the radiation hazards that have developed in recent years. The outstanding feature of this book is the spirit that pervades the text and particularly the concluding chapter: Whither Mankind? Dobzhansky finely upholds the humanitarian tradition that has permeated human genetics almost from its inception. His insistence that man's heredity is not only physical like that of other living things, but also cultural, is a much-needed reminder to lay audiences that the problems of human genetics and their impact on society can hardly be reduced to the simple—and often pernicious—formulae peddled by various propagandist organizations. A selected bibliography on specific aspects of human biology adds to the value of this outstanding piece of popularization and affirmation of faith by a distinguished geneticist.


In the immense literature on colour defects, genetic considerations have figured prominently, though not always critically, and Kalmus' new book is, therefore, particularly welcome as the important genetic aspects are dealt with adequately and authoritatively. Half of the text—which incidentally is remarkable for both its conciseness and its lucidity—is devoted to the methods employed in the determination of colour defect, and the rest almost entirely to a critical assessment of the genetic problems.

The classical work on multiple allelomorphs in the colour deficiencies, and studies on the location of these genes on the X chromosome have added greatly to medical genetics. Recent work on the syndromes due to X chromosomal aberration has increased interest in these studies still more. Workers on colour vision will find Kalmus' account of the techniques of examination helpful, and geneticists will also appreciate his masterly summary of established knowledge and problems on this issue.