

Bookworm

It is clear that the CICADs are extremely valuable sources of information for anyone concerned with any aspect of chemical safety. They should be the first resource for valid, independently assessed information against which to judge the often poorly founded assertions made by those who have vested interests in exaggerating risks or in playing them down. Many of the CICADs are available on the IPCS Web site

<www.inchem.org>. For those interested in the safe use of chemicals, this site contains a treasure chest of freely available information.

 www.who.int/dsa/cicads.htm | www.inchem.org

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The Road to Stockholm: Nobel Prizes, Science and Scientists

István Hargittai, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, ISBN 0-19-850912-X) (xvii + 342 pp)

reviewed by Joel F. Liebman

Although István Hargittai is an internationally recognized chemist, *The Road to Stockholm* is not about chemistry or science per se, but rather about scientists. It deals with the psychological and sociological issues that have led to professional greatness and the greatest institutional recognition a scientist can achieve (i.e., the Nobel Prize). Among such issues are the following: upbringing and the effects of deprivation and family strength; education and the role of mentoring and academic pedigree; culture, both national and religious; and competing demands, intellectual, emotional, political, economic, and societal.

The word "Road" in the title is well taken. The book commences with a foreword by Nobel laureate James D. Watson (co-awardee, Physiology or Medicine, 1962) that outlines some of his path—Hargittai amplifies this at considerable length throughout the book. It is these paths that fill much of this volume. There are many roads, even if not so labeled as I so choose to label them here. Quoting the poet, there's "the road less traveled," the special, unique, ignored observation, characterization, experiment, or insight. There's "the road to Damascus," the sudden epiphany or "Aha!" and spontaneous, instantaneous change of belief, action, or understanding. Recalling the comedian in "the Road to Mandalay," the gentle, joyous excursion and adventure that includes many serendipitous trips and seeming diversions. There is "the road to

Rome," one of many but gets the traveler there fastest and first. Paraphrasing the cliché, "the road from perdition," the survival from dysfunctional families or from genocide. Asking the reader to pardon the reviewer's wordplay, there is "the Colossus of Rhodes," the sheer weight and power of achievement and activity.

We often tell our students that science, both idealized and practiced, is value free and crosses all cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Not so, Hargittai reminds us. National, religious, status, and gender issues have all contributed to winning the Nobel Prize—and not winning the prize. The final chapter is a poignant reminder that only three people can win the Nobel Prize in a given area in a given year, and so Hargittai discusses who did not win but could/should have (in other words, who was "robbed," to quote a non-recipient). The chapter also contains some prophecy on possible future recipients.

The book ends with four pages of acknowledgements (nearly a page and a half therein to Nobelists), 45 pages of notes (footnotes and references), two pages of citations to general reading, and 30 pages for the complete list of Nobelists and the associated citations in physics, chemistry, and physiology or medicine through 2001. Perhaps to underscore that the subject matter is the Nobel Prize and the scientists who won it—and some who didn't—and not the science itself, there is a 10-page name index, but there is no subject matter index. There are also some 80 photographs: two of the Nobel medal and the rest of the major persons who populate the book.

It is the reviewer's feeling that Hargittai has written an interesting and important book. *The Road to Stockholm* offers much insight and information to the reader—at the least, we are given a personalized view of scientists, their science, and the world we share.

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 www.roadtostockholm.com

