

Preface

New Perspectives in Evolution is the result of a special symposium held at The Wistar Institute in 1989, one of a series sponsored by Wistar on matters of broad interest to the scientific community as well as to the Institute's own biomedical researchers. Evolution was especially appealing as a topic for one of these conferences, linked as it is to developmental biology and genetics, two areas of research that have been pursued at The Wistar Institute since its founding in 1892.

"New Perspectives" was actually the second Wistar symposium with an evolutionary theme. In 1966 "Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution" was held at Wistar and recorded as an influential monograph under the editorship of Paul S. Moorhead and Martin M. Kaplan. Originally published by the Wistar Institute Press, demand for this volume was such that it was reprinted by Alan R. Liss, Inc. in 1985. The present collection of articles, covering current evolutionary thought and theory from the diverse perspectives of a number of the field's most respected arbiters, promises to meet with a similar reception—and, we hope, comparable longevity as food for thought.

Even the recent advances in our understanding of the evolutionary process could not be reviewed comprehensively in the limited space of a single publication. However, from a world of possibilities, an illustrious group of experts have contributed papers that are interesting and enlightening and that will give readers a deeper and more rounded appreciation of this central, mammoth, inescapable process of living matter.

We feel especially fortunate that the venerable Ernst Mayr, one of the great formulators of our present notions about evolution and an eminent contributor to the 1966 publication, opened the 1989 symposium and wrote an overview of the field to provide historical perspective for this volume.

In addition, it was fortuitous that Nikolai Vorontsov—who was recently appointed to Gorbachev's cabinet as minister of the environment—was in Philadelphia at the time of the symposium. Epic changes are taking place in the Soviet Union, a country where political and social philosophy dominated, perverted, and almost destroyed the study of evolution, where Swif-
tian Yahoos once dominated any rational approach to genetics. Dr.

Vorontsov's paper is a moving testimony as witness to the age of darkness in Russia in the middle third of our century.

We thank Matthew Meselson of Harvard University for his help in organizing the symposium and for serving as chairman of one of the sessions.

It is a pleasure to express our appreciation to Zoe Zampana, Monica Winter, Diana Burgwyn, Marie Lennon, Cherise Kent, Colleen Cannon, and Betty Warthen, who worked so effectively for the success of the symposium. Bonnie Clause was an organizing force in the publication of the proceedings.

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Leonard Warren
Institute Professor
The Wistar Institute
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania