

Fritz Lipmann – Banquet Speech

Fritz Lipmann's speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, December 10, 1953

Jeg kan ikke modstaa Fristelsen at begynde med at sige nogle Ord paa Dansk; jeg har jo tilbragt syv Aar af mit Liv i Danmark. Men jeg skal nu blive noget hojtidelig og tror nok at det kan jeg gøre bedre paa Amerikansk.

Your Majesties, your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen: This morning, looking out of our window, I was deeply moved to see that the flags had come out to honor men whose only claim to fame may seem that they succeeded in finding answers to some of the mysteries of Nature.

Their purpose often may be none but just to push back a little the limits of our comprehension. Their findings mostly have to be expressed in a scientific language which is understood by only few. We feel nevertheless that the drive and urge to explore nature in all its facets is one of the most important functions of humanity.

To make the general public truly aware of such, that seems to me one of the great achievements of the Nobel Institution.

Prior to the speech, G. Liljestrand, Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, addressed the laureate: Few processes are more fundamental than the slow burning or oxidation of organic matter in our body. And yet the intimate mechanism of this stepwise disintegration is only very incompletely known. Thanks to the investigations of Professor Krebs and Professor Lipmann, new light has been shed on what is actually going on. We have learnt that suitable fragments of our foodstuffs become incorporated in the so-called Krebs cycle where they will be able to act as the fuel of life. And Professor Lipmann has taught us the prominent role in this connection of one of those mysterious substances which occupy a key position in the living organism. His coenzyme A is a necessary link in the transformations of some substances into the Krebs cycle as well as in many other processes. These are fundamental discoveries, but the layman will probably ask for some immediate practical application. We may answer with the counterquestion of Benjamin Franklin: "What is the use of a new-born baby?" And we think that you, the fathers of these babies, who have grown rapidly and already displayed unusual qualities and vigour, have every reason to be proud of your offspring. We offer you our homage and good wishes for their future development.

From *Les Prix Nobel en 1953*, Editor Göran Liljestrand, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1954

<http://nobelprize.org/medicine/laureates/1953/lipmann-speech.html>