

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Nenad Trinajstić

*Ogledi o znanosti i znanstvenicima*

*(Essays about science and the scientists)*

Matica hrvatska, Zagreb 1998, 188 pp.

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There is a large amount of information in chemical books. We know everything about results and methods, but nothing about the very act of discovery, and less than nothing about the authors. In contrast to the style of writing in the 18th century, when scientific papers were essentially stories about discoveries, contemporary papers are only collections of scientific facts. The new book of Professor Trinajstić is intended to fill this gap. The book speaks about Croatian chemistry and Croatian chemists, but not only about them.

The first of the nine essays is devoted to the late Croatian Nobel Laureate Vladimir Prelog (deceased 1998), the third Croatian Nobel Laureate (the other two being the novelist Ivo Andrić (Nobel prize in 1961) and the chemist Leopold Ružička (shared Nobel prize in 1939)). In spite of the fact that Professor Prelog did most a majority of his work at ETH (Zürich, Switzerland), this eminent organic chemist was Croatian, born in Sarajevo in 1906. He obtained his high school education in Zagreb and Osijek, studied chemistry in Prague and from 1935 to 1941 taught organic chemistry at the University of Zagreb. The second chemist presented in this book of essays is Mladen Deželić (1900–1989), an almost forgotten Croatian chemist, since he spent most of his career in Sarajevo. However, he is known for his work on the conservation of the oldest text in the Croatian language, engraved in a stone block around AD 1100 (Tablet from Baška), known as the »precious stone of Croatian language«.

The third essay is devoted to Professor Božo Težak (1907–1980), whom the author knew in person. Moreover, he helped him a lot at the beginning of his professional career. Professor Težak is not only known as a leading scientist in his particular research field (colloid chemistry), but also as the visionary editor of this journal.

The next essay is devoted to Zdenko Majerski (1937–1988), whose scientific work mainly concerned adamantane chemistry. The fifth, and the last scientist in the book is Roald Hoffmann, a chemist (shared Nobel prize in

1981) and a poet. The appearance of this American chemist of Polish origin in Trinajstić's book is obviously due to the friendly relationship between these two chemists, which stemmed from their inclination to see science as a cultural, almost artistic phenomenon, and not as some kind of basic technology.

The next two essays are devoted to chemistry as the science of the future and to this journal, *Croatica Chemica Acta*, its history, editorial policies and perspectives. The last two essays in the book are devoted to the philosophy of science: the first gives a general view (very instructive to the beginner in the field!), and the second, entitled »The book which has to be read«, is about Helmuth Moritz's very influential book »*Science, Mind and Universe*«.

At the end of this review, I warmly recommend this book to every Croatian chemist, especially to our young colleagues. It should also be interesting to non-professionals, because extensive knowledge of chemistry is not needed to read and understand this book. The book is written in Croatian, but I hope that the most interesting essays will find their place in international books and journals.

*Nenad Raos*