

Friburg, Dec 29, 1935

Dear friend!

With all the work, letters and other distractions of the most diverse variety it has become too late for a Xmas or New Year's wish. But yours, which arrived yesterday, shall at least be responded to most cordially. It met us in the festive Xmas room, healthy and merry, with the two younger sons; the children <sup>abroad</sup> were represented by good and gratifying <sup>pleasing</sup> letters.

Before Xmas, we had invited the Institute to a victory banquet (Sieges schmaus) in the "Jähringer Hof" (biggest Hotel in Friburg). We feasted (tafelten, rather idiomatic) in the same room in which Sabo (guest from Japan, friend of mine who later introduced me to his friend, the emperor) had regaled us a while before. To our delight, Süffert was also present; who is almost quite well again. The poor chap (Kerl) had shortly after the Zool. Cong. gross in Stuttgart a vein-inflammation on the leg, which kept him in bed for weeks. The worst was the psychological depression; this has probably kept him from writing to you. Unfortunately, he is very dependant on the state of his nerves. I hope very much, and not without reason, that he will soon become "somebody". Perhaps he will have to choose between several possibilities. (He went to R. Goldschmidt, geneticist at the Kaiser-Wilh. Inst. f. Zoologie Berlin-Dahlem).

Whether my other wish to see Geinitz at last (2) independent, will be fulfilled so soon, is more dubious to me. His  $\alpha$  scribie,  $\alpha$  γος & φελα (fine, isn't it?) is after all in the way of (impairing) his getting on, (his poor publication record)

At the ministry in Berlin, at 2 places, I have thrown my newly-baked nobility (word play on the Nobel Prize) into the weighing scale for him.

My premises were completely accepted, but I am dubious whether the conclusions will be drawn. I wish it also for (the benefit of) my younger ones who should advance. One arrives more and more at the insight that the main achievements are not due to the "activating" but to the "reacting system" (thanks for the suggestion!). [This refers to my coining the term "Aktionsystem", after O. Mengold had used the term "Reaktionsystem". My term is translated in Spemann's book 1938 p. 77 as "acting system". "Activating" or "action" would have been better].

What has become of our Oskar (Schotté)? Please write me a postcard about him. A strange fellow, very talented but deficient, somehow. I find Holtfreter's very similar, but without this defect. His results are extraordinarily important, (but) until now I miss somehow the form-giving (gestaltende) power, and the conceptual penetration (Durcharbeitung) (This sentence is a very concise characterization of H's strength and weakness. Indeed, in his lengthy publications, the discussions are never on par with the exciting data. In this respect he is like Ritz. In contrast, Spemann's discussions often transcend the experimental results by far). In both respects (discoveries and conceptual discourse), I place Mengold

higher (a vast overrating of M., his favorite M. had 3  
none of H(oltfreter's) experimental genius and very little  
of Spemann's conceptual clarity. He was mediocre. and his  
is hardly remembered. No originality)

and of the younger people particularly Seidel (He  
became a very good insect exp. embryologist, pioneer in  
this field).

But H(oltfreter) is uncommonly industrious, and  
he has a lucky hand (green thumb).

I do not yet know the work of P. Weiss, I  
must rush to finish my book. The new (date) in-  
crease so avalanche-like that a completion (ending)  
becomes more and more difficult. (see p. 140 of my book)  
I don't know whether you will be very satisfied  
with the conceptualizations.

"Meines Geistes höchster Feuerflug

hat schon ein Gleichnis, hat ein Bild genug"

my mind's (spirit's) most lofty (highest) fire flight <sup>Goethe</sup>

It is already gratified with the metaphor, with the image"  
At that point you must get engaged, (into action) [?]

Altogether, once in a while I yearn for (getting)  
away from science to pure contemplation (Anschauung)  
of Nature. I shall be content if that remains the  
pleasant form of my symptoms of aging. As soon  
as the fear of getting lost in details begins, then  
it is the best to stop (discontinue).

For the near future I am also kept busy in another  
way, I write letters from morning to late, in part of  
a kind I would not have dreamed of in earlier  
times, for instance yesterday, to a young girl in Klagen-  
furt (Austria) who expects the great miracle of life (a baby)

and is afraid to end on the street, I have dished (4)  
out (verzapft) (2 bit) of my worldly wisdom (Leb-  
(Lebensweisheit) which will be entirely unpalatable  
to her, etc. (aftermath of the Nobel Prize publicity).

Eight days ago, in the State Theater in Karlsruhe,  
in the presence of the Reichs-staethalter (national gov-  
ernor) I have broken a lance for purpose-free (zweckfreie)  
research. On January 19, the city (of Freiburg) will  
arrange a celebration for me in the beautiful old Kauf-  
haus (merchant's house on the Cathedral square, a med-  
ieval magnificent building destroyed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war)  
and, in order that the time not be lost, I shall take  
beforehand a ~~sudorific~~ weisheits-schweiss-treibendes drug  
(his own word combination, literally: wisdom-sweat producing  
[sudorific] drug. He means: wisdom drips out like sweat and  
the drug enhances this) After that, I hope this kind (of  
happenings, in connection with the Nobel Prize) will end.

But dreadful how the newspapers (mis) understand  
me and also lie downright. I do not believe that I  
have changed. If you don't believe me capable of  
the statements that ~~are~~ I am supposed to have made  
~~here~~, then take them confidently (ruhig) as Bünde!

But now an end. Many cordial greetings from  
both of us to you and your wife and my best  
wishes for all pleasant and good things in the New

Year.

Yours

H. Spemann

If you should happen to see the highly ~~esteemed~~  
esteemed (Wohlgezug) Koehler (first psychologist) then  
give him my most cordial greetings.