

ACTA GENETICAE MEDICAE ET GEMELLOLOGIAE

Volumen XIV

N. 3 - Iulii 1965

Franz J. Kallmann - In Memoriam

It was four years ago that Franz J. Kallmann gave me the grievous news. We were standing, among the giant columns of the Paestum Temple, and birds were flying above us, like in the time of haruspices. His eyes were looking faraway; maybe to follow his mind, projected towards the future; maybe to hide the emotion he was feeling?

Hard to believe that Franz J. Kallmann could ever be sad, for all around him expressed his own brightness and his plain and gentle humor. His genuine laugh — true and, above all, good — was contagious. Still, as he was telling me about his disease and his wife who was still unaware, Franz was deeply moved. He was telling me about his assumed thymus tumour, which was being treated; and yet, he was still smoking one of those big cigars, which he seemed to consider indispensable.

He was at the Mendel Institute when it was inaugurated in 1953, and read a paper at the First International Symposium of Medical Genetics, which was held on that occasion. He came back to Italy during the Second Symposium in 1957, and was awarded the h.c. Doctorate by the University of Turin. He was appointed to membership in the International Committee at the First International Congress of Human Genetics (Copenhagen, 1956), and gave a fundamental contribution to the Second Congress to be held in Rome. On the occasion of the latter (Rome, 1961) he gave an introductory address in the Opening Session, and was appointed Chairman of the Permanent International Committee.

The last time I met him was in The Hague, at the XI International Congress of Genetics, in 1963. Two years had gone by since our Paestum conversation, and

his health was declining. Especially his voice was starting to be a problem. We were both moved as we parted, maybe foreboding that ours was our last meeting.

In New York he was to receive a splendid and highly deserved tribute of honors from his friends, his School, his admirors. But the lack of direct news was for us a sign of his poor health conditions, and we were afraid to write to him, out of respect for both his sorrow and his painful silence.

As I visited his New York house, three months after his death, his wife told me that, in his very last days, he had still wanted to give a ultimate contribution to science, and asked for a chromosome study on his leukocytes, in order to ascertain whether the heavy and continuous radiation doses he had undergone had given rise to any alterations.

Then, on May 12th, Franz J. Kallmann died. He was aged 67.

In his house I found displayed the reproduction of an ancient engraving of Paestum, as well as the commemorative medal the Mendel Institute had coined in 1955, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the mendelian laws.

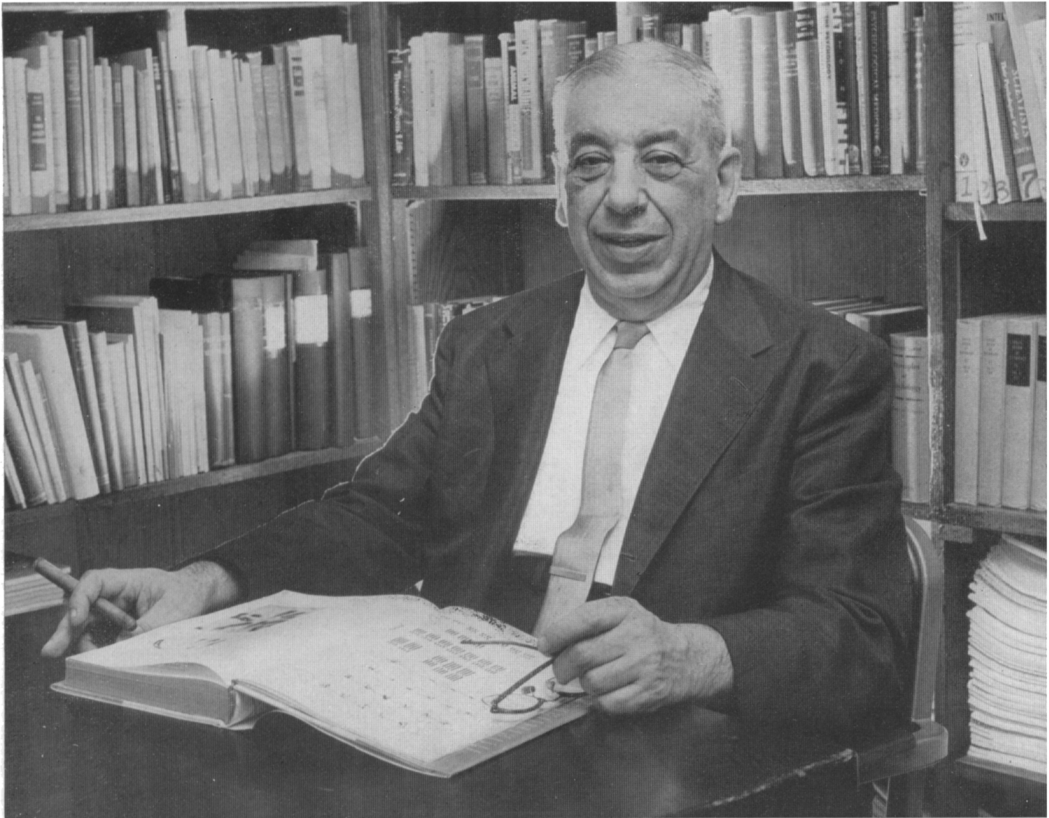
The scientific value of Franz J. Kallmann parallels his human one. It presented, according to me, three principal aspects.

First of all, the methodologic one, necessarily involving, along with clinical experience, statistical evidence. Surrounded by the friendship of such leading biometricians as Deming, Levine, Li, Rainer, Stern and many others, Franz J. Kallmann relied especially on scientific contributions based on mathematical foundations. There was, for him, no valid biology that could not be mathematically verified. One might therefore say that his was a typical mendelian mind.

Secondly, his principal field of research was certainly that of neuro-psychiatric genetics. His School at Columbia University consisted of specialists whom he used to direct towards practical aims, such as assistance to the deaf.

The third aspect was his interest in twin studies. He had probably learned when still in Germany to appreciate the usefulness of studying this natural phenomenon for a better knowledge of human biology. Many of his works reflect this methodologic aspect, both in neuro-psychiatry and in other fields, such as in his researches on tuberculosis. I think I can say that his deep interest in the work being done at the Mendel Institute, since its very beginning, had been originated by our wide use and application of the twin method.

The memory of Franz J. Kallmann is therefore alive in Rome, as well as in New



York. In him, we had found a great friend. We cannot forget how willingly and respectfully he took part in the Audience His Holiness Pius XII accorded to geneticists on September 6th, 1953.

Scientific advances follow and outdate each other from year to year, but the value of individual scientists is always measured against one absolute, ultimate standard. F. J. Kallmann stands in the very first rank.

L. GEDDA