

Distinguished Achievement Citation

Edwin Grant Conklin (1863-1952) Class of 1885

With the presentation of Ohio Wesleyan's Distinguished Achievement Citation, the Ohio Wesleyan University Alumni Association Board of Directors is honored and privileged to recognize Edwin Grant Conklin, Class of 1885, for his contributions to scientific knowledge, philosophy, teaching, and administration.

Educated first in one-room schoolhouses in Waldo and Delaware, Ohio, Conklin earned his B.S., A.B., and M.A. from Ohio Wesleyan, and his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1891. He considered entering the ministry, but was fascinated by the sciences. After receiving his Ph.D., he returned to Ohio Wesleyan at the invitation of President Bashford as the first professor of biology in 1891. Conklin equipped the University's first biology laboratory, introducing individual laboratory work into the curriculum. In 1894, he left to pursue other opportunities, ending his career as professor and chair of the department of biology at Princeton University, where he was the inaugural Henry Fairfield Osborn Professor of Biology. Before accepting positions at Ohio Wesleyan, the University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton, he required that those institutions allow him to teach evolution as part of the biology curriculum. All three did so, and in 1932 he noted that "there has never been any serious attempt to interfere with the teaching of the truths of biology at Ohio Wesleyan University."

Never one to shy away from challenging accepted scientific opinion and one of the first embryologists to use experimental techniques in his research, Conklin discovered that the fates of embryonic cells in marine snail were fixed, not fluid, as had just been reported in sea urchins. He also found that the origins of tissues could be traced back to the egg; his work upset the prevailing notion that specific tissues could be recognized only much later in embryonic development. He spent many summers at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, MA studying the development of various marine organisms.

Conklin appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1939, as part of an extensive article lauding his scientific achievements, which include his books *Heredity and Environment in the Development of Man*, *Freedom and Responsibility: A Biological View of Some Problems of Democracy*, and *Man: Real and Ideal*, among others. He also published three other books and some 250 papers.

In addition to many other positions, Conklin was president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, President of the American Philosophical Society (twice), and President of the American Society of Naturalists. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the highest recognition an American scientist can receive, and also was awarded the National Institute of Social Sciences Gold Medal. He received honorary degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Ohio Wesleyan, Yale, Western Reserve, Temple, Johns Hopkins, and Princeton.

In his later years, Conklin became interested in the interrelationship of science, philosophy, and society; a number of his publications at that time dealt with ethics and religion, and for much of his time at Princeton, he taught a seminar of the philosophy of biology.

For the breadth of his intellectual and professional achievements and his integration of science, philosophy, religion, and ethics, we applaud and recognize Edwin Grant Conklin with the presentation of this Distinguished Achievement Citation.

Presented May 19, 2012