

Professor Armin de Meijere, Practical Elegance in Organic Chemistry



Armin de Meijere

German chemistry has embodied “practical elegance” since long before *Advanced Synthesis and Catalysis* chose it as a major concept. It is characterized by scientific originality, steadiness, and practicality, resulting in enormous technological and economical impact. In fact, contemporary chemists worldwide have been guided by towering German scientists. Professor Armin de Meijere carries on this glorious tradition.

Armin’s thinking is both methodical and imaginative. Being trained in the field of physical organic chemistry in his youth by Wolfgang Lüttke (Göttingen) and Kenneth B. Wiberg (Yale), Armin carefully analyzes molecular structures and reactivity and boldly advances toward synthesizing compounds of theoretical or practical importance. He has consistently maintained an unusual interest in the architecture of small-ring organic compounds which has led to his invention of various new small-ring building blocks for organic synthesis and the construction of a range of strained polycyclic compounds with unique properties. Over the decades Armin has extended his research territory to organometallic catalysis, leading to the discovery of compounds that display unconven-

tional chemical properties and physical functions. With his exceptionally deep understanding he has been able to solve many difficult problems in organic chemistry.

Armin de Meijere is very German, serious and extremely hardworking. He is not only a creative scientist but also a gifted educator who has nurtured the next generation in Germany and all over the world. I have noted that, unlike many traditional German professors of dignified appearance, this modern scientist is endowed with a special gentleness and cheerfulness, and he has worked hard in the interest of our community at large. In particular, his managerial expertise is remarkable, as is evident in his unfailing effort in the 1990s to bring to fruition the huge six-volume publication of the Houben-Weyl, *Methods of Organic Chemistry*, on Three- and Four-membered Carbocycles, E17 (Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart).

Armin and I have walked together down the pathways of synthetic organic chemistry. I recall that our long-term relation began in May 1989, a period of calm just six months before the totally unexpected (at least for me) collapse of the Berlin Wall. Armin, then a Professor at Hamburg just prior to his move to Göt-

tingen, arranged the whole program for my Merck-Schuchardt Lectureship visits to five northern German universities and the E. Merck KG in Darmstadt. The warm hospitality of Armin and his charming wife Ute in Hamburg made my travels even more enjoyable. Since this memorable event Armin and I have crossed paths at many conferences. He has many friends internationally, and serves as an excellent chemistry ambassador. Whether in Germany or elsewhere, wherever I have gone to speak, he is there.

Armin, I hope that you will enjoy a healthy and happy 70th birthday, a very important occasion in oriental countries. In the East, the 70th birthday is cele-

brated as *koki*, a reference to a famous Chinese poem by Du Fu (712–770) on the rarity of attaining such a venerable age. Dear Professor de Meijere, you are still full of fresh vitality, and our life expectancy continues to increase. Congratulations and best wishes for many fruitful years to come!

Ryoji Noyori

RIKEN, 2-1, Hirosawa, Wako, Saitama 351-0198, Japan

E-mail: noyori@riken.jp

Department of Chemistry, Nagoya University, Aichi, Nagoya 464-8602, Japan