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The Blue Book, which is now at its 6th volume, is all about scientific discoveries. Whereas anniversaries may not always justify celebrations, this year is different for three great reasons.

With the rest of the scientific world, we observe 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy, 400 years after Galileo made his first telescopic observations. Against a background of dominant Renaissance ‘rebirth’, which contended that everything worth knowing had already been ascertained by the great Greek and Roman philosophers, Galileo (1564–1642) represents the scientific revolution that sought to make new observations using a scientific approach. He then coined the then avant-garde phrase: ‘The grand look of nature (for him – the universe) is written in the language of mathematics’.

The Darwin year 2009 marks 200 years from his birth and 150 years since On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection was first published. We can easily understand why Darwin has been so influential – he reported his theory in a book that today we would call popular science. The Origin of Species consists of a sustained, strongly argued case with enough stunning examples to convince educated readers without overwhelming them with too much technical detail. As biology and medical research have been drifting toward cellular and molecular biology, those of us who took part in various Darwin events throughout the world were again astonished at nature’s splendor and the astuteness of evolution. These events may release a wave of research into organic biology and evolution that may well open new research horizons. This is exemplified in our 2009 selection of the Yearbook articles.

It is also 150 years since the philosopher John Stuart Mills (1806–1873) published his On Liberty, in which he argued in favor of an open exchange of ideas. By forcing other individuals to reexamine and reaffirm their ideas in the process of scientific publishing and debate, ideas are kept from declining into mere dogmas. This Yearbook applauds Mills’ philosophy and makes its best to realize it in the field of pediatric endocrinology.

Finally, 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the invention of the Web – young but prominent.

Why do we bother to cite these giants of the past in a Yearbook that deals with the most contemporary of all observations? Newton declared that ‘we can see farther because we sit on the shoulders of giants’.

We keenly acknowledge the generous support by Pfizer that makes the Yearbook project possible. The tireless work of our Associate Editors and authors makes this important text for pediatric endocrinologists an indispensable tool in keeping updated with the latest. By reading this collection of the 250 best articles of the year, the reader will recognize the fact that (to paraphrase) there is no such thing as the best articles, yet this is a book about them.

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Jean-Claude Carel (Paris)