

LAUDATIO TORE FRÄNGSMYR

F. Lox

When an institute reaches its 25th anniversary, thoughts naturally turn toward writing its history, reviewing its realizations, and looking into its future. This very year the Museum for the History of Sciences and Technology of the University of Ghent, Belgium, celebrates its quarter of a century of existence. For us, history of sciences does not mean the description of a buried past but an active search for and a demonstration of the pathways along which the various sciences have evolved. By following the thread of Ariadne, mankind has attempted to understand the facts leading to realizations and discoveries and to create an environment for progress and for grasping the universe. Knowledge must be passed to the next generations. This is a basic concept of humanity. And in this context, Professor Frängsmyr, we situate your activities as a scientist and an educator. This Sarton Memorial Award may be considered a recognition of your intensive and successful endeavours in the field of the history of sciences. Within a relatively short period of time you have succeeded in publishing twenty-two books and chapters in books as well as a large number of scientific articles. All of us recognize that George Sarton is one the most referred authors in the province of the history of science and obviously you are following in his wake. We feel honored that you readily accepted to travel to the city where the "master" was born and to the University that promoted him, to accept the Chair which was created to perpetuate his memory. But today it is your contribution to the history of science we wish to honor in the first place.

Tore Frängsmyr was born in 1938 at Skelleftea, in the very north of Sweden, near the arctic circle. He started his study of philosophy at the University of Uppsala in 1958, at the age of twenty, and obtained his PhD in the History of Science at the Faculty of Humanities of that University in 1969. He initiated his scientific career as Assistant

Professor of the History of Science and was appointed Professor at the newly established University of Linköping in 1981 where he joined the program for the investigation of technology and social change. In 1982 he obtained a personal Chair as Research Professor in History of Science at the University of Uppsala. It was the start of a particularly productive period, stimulated by the recognition of his work by the University and in his country at large. Indeed, Professor Frängsmyr was elected Fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. In Stockholm he founded a new research institute called "The Centre for History of Science" of which he is the director. This center was gifted with archives and collections of manuscripts and instruments, among them the Nobel archives. Since 1988 Professor Frängsmyr also acts as editor of "Les Prix Nobel", the Yearbook of the Nobel Foundation.

The publications of Professor Frängsmyr concern a broad range of philosophical and physical subjects, among them the history of geology. His PhD thesis, for example, was devoted to the problem of "Geology and the doctrine of Creation during the 18th century". In that century — which was made famous by composers such as Bach, Haendel, Mozart and Beethoven — Sweden produced high ranking scientists, e.g. Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), Emmanuel Swedenborg and Anders Celsius. All of them had to compromise between the bible and the new scientific explanations of the creation of the world. In the 18th century we recognise the remoulding of traditional psychological, economic and sociological views, enhanced by the increasingly pervasive impact of sciences and technology. In the 18th century you found inspiration to write about the German philosopher Christian von Wolff (1679-1754) who was influential in Sweden between 1720 and 1760. The initially rationalistic von Wolff who later on changed his attitude to an apologetic one for the orthodox Church was used as a weapon against the Enlightenment. These historical facts stimulated you to work on the Swedish Enlightenment as well and we hope to read you soon and to learn your views about the relations between philosophy, religion and science. Last but not least, Professor Frängsmyr studied and published about George Sarton and the beginnings of the "History of Science". It has been stated that Sweden became one of the pioneering countries of this then novel discipline. And indeed, already in 1932 one of your

predecessors, Professor Johan Nordström, inspired by Sarton, established the Chair of "History of Science" at the University of Uppsala.

It seems to me that this discipline is acting as a virus : the more you become involved in it, the more you are broadening your activities. So also Professor Frängsmyr, who since 1989 has spread his activities worldwide. He became Secretary-General of the International Union of the History of Philosophy and Science and was appointed Director of the International Summerschool for the History of Sciences, the body which organizes lectures at the Universities of Bologna, Uppsala, and Berkely.

Dear Professor Frängsmyr, I also wish to mention that your flight to the roots of George Sarton detoured. As a matter of fact, the first steps towards today's ceremony were made some years ago — I guess it was in March 1989 — when we met in Strasbourg, France, at the Round Table Conference implemented by the European Foundation of Scientific Research. All national delegates were involved to some extent with the history of sciences and I vividly remember that when each of us was invited to introduce himself, you referred to George Sarton to situate your work in the field of history of science. It was proud that Sarton, who was born in one of the smallest countries of all those represented at the meeting, was the only person mentioned by name and appeared to be recognized by all participants as the key figure of the discipline for the discussion of which we had been convened to Strasbourg. Now that you are in Ghent, personifying Sarton's ideals and ideas and at the same time closing the pathway through which Sarton's example has circled from this his native city to the United States, to your country and back to Ghent, we look forward at a still more intensive and close cooperation between our respective Institutes and Universities. We are convinced that your presentation will further stress the importance of the history of sciences for generations to come. This is the second reason why we are keen to have you amidst us today. And the final reason why I am happy that you came is my belief that your presence shall consolidate the link between the Ghent Museum of Science and Technology and your own Institution.

In 1988 Sarton-Medal holder Otto Gekeler presented Johann Beckmann, the famous 18th-century scientist of Göttingen, who coined the word "technology" and, above all, was the founder of the new

discipline called "Commodity Science". But did you know that Professor Beckmann did travel on several occasions to your country to meet and exchange ideas with your Carolus Linnaeus ? Apparently the scientific world was already starting to shrink in the 18th century !

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude my introductory remarks by quoting a sentence from the preface of Professor Frängsmyr's "Science in Sweden" which perfectly situates his involvement with the history of science : "When the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences was founded in 1739, Linnaeus and his colleagues wished first and foremost to stimulate the growth of science in Sweden, but they knew that the best way to do this was to establish ties with science in other countries. Although external circumstances have changed, this remains the overall aim of the Academy's activities".

