

HOSAM ELKHADEM: HISTORIAN AND HUMANIST

*F. Vandamme**

It is a real pleasure for me to be the *Collega Proximus*, who has the honour to introduce Hosam Elkhadem. He has been awarded the George Sarton Medal, and he deserves this for many reasons. The most obvious one is his enormous and outstanding work in the field of history of science, more particularly his work about science and medicine in the Muslim Middle Ages. Indeed, this work by itself would justify the award. But we are pleased to say that there are at least five more reasons which, each independently of the other, would justify the awarding of the Sarton Medal to Hosam Elkhadem.

We have in mind his work and study of George Sarton himself. It is evident that through his study of science in the Islamic Middle Ages, he became acquainted with Sarton's scientific work. Thus did he become interested in Sarton the man, thus did he become one of the outstanding experts on Sarton.

Elkhadem shared with Sarton not only an interest in the science of the Muslim Middle Ages, he has also devoted much of his life furthering the interest and study in the history and philosophy of science. Not only by his membership on several boards of societies which favour such research but also as editor he has played an important role, not to mention his participation in numerous national and international symposia and congresses.

* Ghent, February 12, 1987.

But even more important, we want to mention that, in the Sartonian spirit, Hosam Elkhadem studies the history and philosophy of science not only for the sake of gaining better knowledge of the past. Rather his aim is, by helping to further the cause of a better knowledge of the science of the past in general and of the Islamic golden ages in particular - the cradle of modern science - to enlarge our understanding of the science of today, in the hope that in this way we shall be able better to shape, adapt and direct our science of tomorrow and by doing so help to create a better society and mankind.

This is a mankind who will live in harmony in its ecosphere. This is a mankind who will respect and stimulate the individual as well as the surrounding group, keeping in mind that merely local, momentary optimization is like a cancer which destroys the whole system. Similarly, a superficial global optimization, at the expense of the subgroup or individual, causes disaster in the long run.

Science has, can and will bring mankind progress if we keep learning to understand its methods, its value and limitations, if we keep learning to manage it intelligently for the sake of mankind and the ecosphere. For this is there a better source than the history of science ?

