

## Gideon Freudenthal Leaves *Science in Context*

Gideon Freudenthal, one of the founding editors of this journal and its *spiritus rector* for many years, has decided to leave his editorship with this issue. The fate and the shape of *Science in Context* as a journal is so intimately linked with his personal engagement for science in context as a program that a few words are in place concerning this remarkable linkage, words that may also serve as at least an attempt to express the gratitude of the editorial team for what has been accomplished by Gideon Freudenthal in the past years.

As few other journals in the humanities, *Science in Context* stands for a program that it has contributed to initiate and to establish. When the journal started in 1987, the history of science was still in the process of escaping from its ancillary roles as a subdiscipline of general history or as a mine of examples for the philosophy of science. Today it is widely recognized as a multidisciplinary endeavor, exchanging insights and methods with such diverse fields as anthropology, history of art, the cognitive sciences, sociology, or economic history. There is hardly another field so rich in methodological approaches, discipline-crossing insights, and potential for reflection on the future of our science- and technology-based culture. Hence, this journal has been conceived by its founders as a forum for the scholarly dialogue on a multiplicity of perspectives. A broad view of the history of science as a history of human knowledge and its cultural evolution has therefore been one of its hallmarks from the beginning. There is a bit of sad irony that Gideon Freudenthal leaves this journal in order to dedicate himself more intensively to pursuing research precisely on issues which constitute the spirit of the journal, in particular on the multiplicity of world views and on the role of dialogue and controversy in the history of knowledge.

There are great risks in opening-up a field of study to multidisciplinary approaches: the loss of quality standards, scholarly rigor, and the consistency of academic traditions (including their often invaluable long-term memory), but also of comprehensibility and meaningfulness, which all may get lost when insights are transferred from one field to another. Gideon Freudenthal has been aware of these risks from the beginning. He has reacted to them not only with the combination of historical rigor and philosophical clarity characterizing his own writings, but also by implementing — with imagination and fortitude — the counter-measures embodied in the structure of this journal. Perhaps the most outstanding such counter-measure is the Argument at the beginning of each article. Is there any author of this journal who has not felt it to be a burden to produce such an Argument according to the desiderata of the editors? Surely only those who have been relieved of this burden by receiving a drafted proposal for their Argument

written by Gideon Freudenthal himself, a master of this unusual literary genre. A short summary might have been more customary and more acceptable, but a succinct account of the line of reasoning of a paper, from the questions it tries to answer, its starting point in the available knowledge, via a description of its method, to a concise statement of its results, to be readable also by a non-expert, is more than most other journals would dare to require, interdisciplinary or not. And yet, it is often precisely the Argument that makes a paper accessible across disciplinary borders because it forces the author to leave the parochial perspective of a native field and to describe from a bird's eye perspective what a paper is all about, if it is about something.

Another counter-measure against the loss of scholarly standards in a multidisciplinary field, characteristic for Gideon Freudenthal's contributions to *Science in Context*, is the republication of historical papers (in English translation if English was not the original language) usually together with a bio-bibliography of their authors. Such republications aim at reintroducing older approaches and insights into present discussions where they play no role either because they have fallen into oblivion or because they never entered the mainstream. In this way, *Science in Context* hopes to contribute to the constitution of a long-term memory in a field still largely characterized by idiosyncratic expertise, a memory which may help to contest the dominance of fashions and open-up the horizon beyond the struggles of the day. The republication of outstanding historical papers is also intended as a reminder against the neglect of past achievements which often are simply ignored because of linguistic or disciplinary barriers. Gideon Freudenthal's firm belief in scholarly standards is perhaps nowhere more evident than in his relentless struggle for establishing and keeping *Science in Context* a strictly refereed journal, against all temptations. This struggle, however, has been and continues to be a strenuous one, also for the present editors, primarily because benchmarking is hard to realize when there is no common bench to which one can refer. Also, it is difficult to implement scholarly standards when these standards are themselves at issue, for instance in controversies between different approaches to the history of science. Keeping the balance between the openness towards a multiplicity of perspectives and the insistence on scholarly rigor was one of Gideon Freudenthal's masterful achievements. It remains a challenge for the future of this journal which may require new responses.

After Gideon Freudenthal's departure the journal will inevitably change, not only because it has to face new challenges such as the changed environment for journals due to the Internet, but also because what he has *been* for this journal cannot be substituted. What will remain, in any case, is what he has *done* for the journal, establishing it as a pioneering venture into a new field of study and leaving it as a thriving enterprise, to which he has dedicated some of the best years of his life. Quite possibly he will miss us as much as we miss him.

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