

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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BENOÎT SEVERYNS

In the history of science, institutional life is following the four-yearly rhythm of international congresses: Paris (1968), Moscow (1973), Edinburgh (1977), Bucharest (1981), Berkeley (1985), Hamburg-Munich (1989), Zaragoza (1993), Liège (1997), Mexico (2001) and soon Beijing (2005).

The beginnings of *Llull* coincide with the Edinburgh congress (1977). This period marks a watershed in the life of the two institutions in charge of representing the discipline at the international level, that is, the International Academy of the History of Science (AIHS) and the Division of the History of Science of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS-DHS). Separated since the Moscow congress in 1973, both institutions led then an autonomous life: the Union, which was linked to the UNESCO, to the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and to national organisations dealing with scientific policy, underwent the influence of international politics; the Academy knew the fate of a scholarly society, which was mastering its own destiny, but was rendered precarious by its scanty financial resources. It is necessary to go back in time in order to understand these facts.

1. The origins

The International Academy of the History of Science was born in 1928. At the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo, a group of scholars led by Aldo Mieli decided that the new discipline, should be institutionalised. These «founding fathers» were George Sarton (Harvard), Charles Singer (Londres), Abel Rey (Paris), Henry E. Sigerist (Leipzig), Karl Sudhoff (Leipzig), A. Fohnan (Oslo), W. Haberling (Koblenz), A.W. Nieuwenhuys (Leiden). This group first constituted an international committee, which organised the first International Congress of the History of Science in Paris on 20-25 May 1929.

On this occasion, the international committee was settled at number 12 *rue Colbert* in Paris, in the former hotel of *Madame de Lambert*, where Henri Berr offered the hospitality of the *Centre International de Synthèse*, created in 1925 and established there since 1927. In 1932, the international committee became the International Academy of the History of Science. The *Centre de Synthèse* and the Academy carried on together intellectual projects of a rare quality, of which one can have an overview by running through volumes XI to XXI of *Archeion*, the journal founded by Mieli in 1919 and

which became the organ of the Academy. In the 1930s, the Academy underwent a series of modifications, notably the creation of national committees besides individual members. But in 1938, Aldo Mieli had to go in exile with *Archeion* in Argentina, where he died in misery in 1950. The last issue of *Archeion* was published there in 1942.

After the war, the Academy was settled again by a new president, the Swiss Arnold Reymond (1874-1958). It was Pierre Brunet and Pierre Sergescu who revived *Archeion* under the form of the *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences, nouvelle série d'Archeion*, the first issue of which was published by Hermann & Cie (Paris), in 1947 after the 5th International Congress of History of Science, held in Lausanne in October. Hermann published the *Archives* until 1970.

The Academy started to publish a collection of studies, of which issues 1 to 30 were published by various publishers (1948-1983).

When UNESCO was founded, it made partnerships with non-governmental organisations representative of the scientific community, such as the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), which was founded in 1931, and later the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (CIPSH) founded in 1949. It seems that Joseph Needham and Marcel Florquin were those who had the idea of introducing the history of science in ICSU under the form of a specific union grouping national committees recognised by their respective countries. The Academy did not correspond perfectly to this profile since it both included individual members and national committees. This is why the Academy was invited to elaborate the statutes of an International Union of History of Science. The negotiations were led, for UNESCO, by Joseph Needham and Armando Cortesão (Portugal) and, for the Academy, by Pierre Sergescu (Romania), and Arnold Reymond (Switzerland), Johan Adriaan Vollgraff (Netherlands) and Pierre Brunet (France). At the Lausanne congress (1947), the Union was born and integrated ICSU the same year and the Academy was recognised as the «counselling body» of its scientific activity.

Now, it was the Union which had the task of organising international congresses. This was a source of conflicts, all the more since the Academy and the *Archives internationales* were financed by UNESCO via the Union.

In parallel with this, an International Union of Philosophy of Science (IUPS) had been created in 1949, but it was not admitted immediately as a member of ICSU. It was in 1956 that the two Unions were firmly invited by ICSU to merge into a single Union and the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science was created, with its two divisions, the Division of History of Science (DHS) and the Division of Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science (DLMP) organising separate congresses.

In order to bring the two divisions closer, the union created in 1971 a joint commission so as to organise conferences on subjects of common interest.

2. The Union from 1977 to 2002

From 1977 to 2002, the Union had the following Presidents : Ashot Tigranovitch Grigorian (USSR, 1978-1981), Erwin Hiebert (USA, 1982-1985), Paolo Galluzzi (Italy, 1986-1989), William Shea (Canada, 1990-1993), Robert Fox (UK, 1993-1997), Bidare Venk Subbarayappa (India, 1997-2001), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (Turkey, since 2001) and as Secretary Generals Eric G. Forbes (UK, 1978-1981), William Shea (Canada, 1982-1989), Tore Frangsmyr (Sweden, 1990-1993), Robert Halleux (Belgium, 1994-2001), Juan José Saldaña (Mexico, since 2001).

In many respects, they imprinted their own personal mark on the Union's political evolution. They had to manage the relations with ICSU, those with the other Division, the emergence of new specialised disciplines, but also the general evolution of the scientific landscape.

Within ICSU, the Union represented according to the thought of its founders, a kind of historical and philosophical consciousness. This is why the DHS took to heart to tighten the links with the other scientific unions. It is in this spirit that six inter-union Commissions were created: with the International Union of Geological Sciences (Paris, 1968), the International Mathematical Union (Moscow, 1971), the International Geographical Union (Moscow, 1971), the International Astronomical Union (Moscow, 1971), the International Union of Soil Sciences (Liège, 1997), and the International Meteorological Union (Mexico, 2001).

In parallel with the collaboration with scientific unions, which began as early as the founders' period in a positivist spirit, the dialogue with the unions responsible for the humanities began in the years 1999-2001. Negotiations with the CIPSH (International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies) were led in 2000-2001 and the joining of DHS to CIPSH was voted at the congress of Mexico.

As to the relations with the Division of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Sciences, they were not easy. The differences were important in the approaches, political roots and institutional organisation. Joint conferences were organised in 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1994, and 1998. Finally, a memorandum of cooperation between the two Divisions was signed in Cracow on 25 August 1999. The new President of the *Joint Commission*, Erwin Neuenschwander, made every effort to open new fields of collaboration, for example by organising a colloquium on scientific models in Zürich on 19-22 October 2000.

In this connection, it is important to observe that if scientists and philosophers have been, for historical reasons, partners for historians of science, they do not benefit from any form of exclusivity. The adhesion to CIPSH opened fruitful perspectives of collaboration with historians, philosophers, archeologists, linguists, ethnologists. A similar

action with the International Council for Social Sciences would open perspectives for common work with economists and sociologists.

In charge of coordinating, at world level, the documentation, research and teaching activity, the Union set up specialised commissions as new fields were opening: Bibliography and Documentation; Science in East Asia; Scientific Instruments; Islamic Civilisation; Modern Chemistry; Modern Physics; Oceanography; Pacific Circle; Science and Empire; Teaching; Women in Science; Ancient and Medieval Astronomy. Besides, it is linked to independent scientific sections, such as the International Committee for Cooperation in the History of Technology (ICOHTEC) or the International Committee of Historical Metrology (CIMH).

Finally, the Union, by its very composition, was a microcosm of the great political stakes of the ending century. Traditionally, its activity was led by an East-West polarity. At the congress of 1981, historians of science of southern countries published the «declaration of Bucharest» calling for a change in perspective. But the political changes in socialist countries followed, from 1985 to 1993, a very Western-style politics. From 1993 to 2002, it is a resolutely south-oriented tendency which imprinted its mark to general politics with the entry of new countries and a congress devoted to the theme «Science and cultural diversity».

3. The Academy from 1977 to 2002

From 1977 to à 2002, the Academy was presided over by the following: Alfred Rupert Hall (1977-1981), Mirko Drazen Grmek (1981-1985), Olaf Pedersen (1985-1989), Vincenzo Cappelletti (1989-1997), William Shea (1997-2001) and John Heilbron (since 2001); and the Permanent Secretaries were: Pierre Costabel (1965-1983), John North (1983-1989), Jacques Roger (1989-1990) and Emmanuel Poulle (since 1993).

Now separated from the Union, it reinforced its mission of a scholarly society. Deliberately elitist, it recruits by cooptation, includes, like the continental academies two categories of members, effective and corresponding, the second designation representing a kind of probationary period. Similarly, its members have been limited to 120 effectives and 180 corresponding since 1987. Totally independent of political institutions, it strives to maintain a certain scientific tradition founded on erudition. As such, it is bound to collaborate with other academies in the world. This eminent role was confirmed in June 2002 by its entry in the *Union Académique Internationale*.

Within the scientific community, the Academy exerts a «magistrature d'influence» through its plenary conferences to congresses, the Alexandre Koyré medal, the prize for young historians, and through its publications.

It is traditional that the organisers of international congresses provide space in their programme so that a representative of the Academy can read a plenary conference on a subject concerning the future of the discipline. In this connection, those of 1993 in Zaragoza, where Vincenzo Cappelletti launched the project of a new *Storia della scienza*, that of Liège in 1997, during which Mirko Drazen Grmek gave a lecture entitled «Regard d'un historien sur les maladies émergentes», or still the touching Mexico session devoted to the works of Grmek himself, who had treated the Academy like his own child for so many years.

The Koyré Medal is awarded every four years for a scholar's career contributions rather than for a particular achievement. For this reason, it was awarded successively to Marshall Clagett (1981), Charles C. Gillispie (1986), John D. North (1989), Roshdi Rashed (1991), William Shea (1993), Juan Vernet (1995), René Taton (1997), John Heilbron (1999), Izabella Bashmakova and Christian Houzel (2001). As for the prize for young historians, it is awarded every two years for the work of a researcher of less than 40 years old. The names of the laureates bear witness to the discernment with which the Academy identified these promising scholars: Christoph Meinel (1986), Bill Newman (1989), Baudouin Van Den Abeele (1993), Marco Beretta (1995), Marie-Madeleine Saby (1997), Andrea Breard (1999), Hiroshi Hirai (2001).

But the Academy's mission is best reflected in its publications, the *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences*. In order to carefully preserve its intellectual independence, the Academy chose to work without any subsidy and not to depend of any public institution. This means that its high-quality publications, which were difficult to sell, were linked to the dynamism of the collections' managers, but dependent on political changes of the commercial publisher.

The *Archives* had the following editors: Mirko Drazen Grmek (1965-1970), John North (1974-1984), Robert Halleux (since 1985). From 1974 to 1981 the journal was published by Steiner in Wiesbaden, thanks to the substantial aid provided to the Academy by a German sponsor, who was a friend of Willy Hartner. After the unilateral breach of the Steiner contract, it is Vincenzo Cappelletti who in 1982 made the journal enter the bosom of the Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, thus inaugurating an exemplary collaboration between the team of Robert Halleux in Liège and Alberto Postigliola in Rome. The *Archives* intend to remain faithful to Aldo Mieli's universalist humanism. They publish high level scientific articles in all fields and covering all periods, which they are proud to publish in six languages: French, English, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian.

As to the *Collection de travaux*, it presented at the beginning the specificity that every author would benefit from the Academy's financial help and could choose his/her publisher provided that the name of the Collection be mentioned on the title page. In 1989, the Collection was welcomed by Brill in Leyde, which published numbers 31 to

37. In 1997, the Academy finally concluded an agreement with another editor specialised in erudition, Brepols in Turnhout (Belgium). Under the title *De diversis artibus*, the new series of the «Collection de travaux» already published 7 volumes in its *series maior* and, in its *series minor*, the 21 volumes of the Liège congress proceedings. At the pace of four a year, the volumes are typed and edited at the *Centre d'Histoire des Sciences et des Techniques* of the University of Liège. The Collection specialises itself in the essential and permanent working tools, which other publishers are not willing to publish: texts' editing and translation, correspondences, bibliographies, inventories of manuscripts or instruments. The *De diversis artibus* series, headed by Emmanuel Pouille and Robert Halleux, will soon be completed by a medieval series, *De natura rerum*, headed by Charles Burnett, Michael McVaugh and Baudouin Van den Abeele.

From 1977 to 2001, the Academy continued to hold meetings of its Council and kept its documents in the old house of the *rue Colbert*, which housed the *Centre de synthèse*, which time and the negligence of man rendered more and more fragile. On 28 September 2000, the director of the *Centre International de Synthèse* informed the Permanent Secretary about the necessity to move, the building becoming dangerous; on 20 January 2001, an extraordinary meeting of the Academy board decided to transfer the headquarters to the *Ecole Nationale des Chartes*, located place de la Sorbonne. On 9 May 2001, the Academy's library and archives were moved to Liège and joined the administrative secretariat of the *Archives*. Combined with the Union's archives, the Academy archives provides a basis for the reflection on future actions.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, let us mention some reflections arising from our own experience. Institutions and people support each other: people's dynamism prevents institutions from inertia, and the institutions' perenity makes up for the precariousness of human life.

However different the Union and the Academy, scholars who are managing them are facing the same challenges: chronical shortage of funds, insufficient representativity towards the community, weak impact on the decision-makers of scientific policy.

The history of science is struck hardly by the world economic crisis and neo-liberal utilitarianism. As the history of science «does not serve any purpose», many prestigious chairs, created in the past are now suppressed and replaced by ethics or scientific policy chairs. Money is lacking to invite at international congresses researchers from countries struck by the economic crisis. The activity of the union is entirely dependent on the resources of its own officers. The Academy, which has always been virtual, resists better these hardships by balancing its actions and its means and by reviving the traditions of correspondence of the *République des Lettres*.

The representativity of these institutions, as well as that of any institution, is regularly questioned by practitioners. National committees, which are contributing to the Union, are blamed for including more politicians than scholars. The Academy is blamed the practice of cooptation, or even the «clique» spirit which, for example, leaves distinguished scholars for years the status of corresponding members because nobody thinks about promoting them, and all the others who are simply left outside the Academy. The latter is conscious of these weaknesses and it undertook reforms, the first of which will raise the number of places through a policy of recruitment. On the other hand, in addition to French, it also adopted English as a working language.

Finally, the real influence of the Union and the Academy is weak near the individuals and groups to whom the political and financial decision belongs. Thus at ICSU, the weight of human sciences (geography, psychology, history and philosophy of science) is light compared with the great physical, chemical, and biological unions.

It is maybe a question of scale, or rather of disproportion, between the partners involved. In this connection, the initiative of Claude Debru, who created a European Society for History of Science should be greeted since it will be closer both to practitioners and to decision-makers and possible financial partners.