

## INTRODUCTION

*The first issue of Diogenes, an international journal published by the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies with the support of UNESCO, appeared twenty-five years ago. The publication of this—the one hundredth issue—thus completes the journal's first quarter of a century. The quarterly issues now appear in English, French and Spanish; annual anthologies are also published in Arabic, Hindi and Japanese. Throughout this period, the journal has remained faithful to its original aims; its first readers may no doubt recall that it had earmarked as the main of these the updating, within the limits of its competence, of the general culture of those who, though attracted by a certain field, did not for all that keep aloof from the evolution of others.*

*Those engaged in research used often to be fascinated by the methods and discoveries of masters whose teaching had gradually acquired the status of dogma, so that they often became more paralyzing than productive. They blocked imagination instead of stimulating it. It was often more conformist than daring to remain faithful to doctrines such as those which for instance gave a most exclusive room to the importance of sex in human behavior or to the one concerned with the mechanism of opposed interest in social history. These motives, in fact long neglected, acted now the part of a hypothesis which, mechanically applied, offered prefabricated solutions to any problem.*

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They thus distracted from original research and from bold innovation in the human sciences, rather than inciting one to use the outcome of new disciplines and of domains hitherto unexplored.

Dogmatism and verbalism made it difficult to criticize such or such a system which had a vocabulary flexible enough to rule out, from the very start, the slightest objection or discredit the adversary. It went so far as to have words such as complex, dialectic and, later, structure practically banished from the pages of Diogenes, whenever they were treated as persuasive in themselves and the mere mention of them took the place of explanation or proof. This was just a matter of hygiene. Since then time has done its work.

At the same time, and now in a positive way in order to tackle the trouble at the root, Diogenes has published articles dealing with questions of epistemology, in which the most exacting conditions of scientific logic were firmly formulated. As a matter of fact the human sciences, where guidelines are often sadly lacking, are still in need of such restraint.

On the other hand faithful to its original creed, Diogenes persistently is recommending approaches other than those of extreme specialization and particularized research. It was a matter of considering and comparing different methods, rather than grouping together disparate phenomena, the similarities of which were often deceptive, merely apparent or even accidental. The so-called interdisciplinary meetings, which Diogenes' defense of "diagonal sciences" made fashionable, consisted all too often in a succession of monologues by specialists, each emphasizing the irreducible uniqueness of his own particular field. Such meetings thus only partially met the concept of "diagonal sciences" and, at times, were even its very opposite. Indeed, Diogenes had not advocated the analysis of one particular phenomenon according to various scientific procedures (as might a coin be studied in turn by a chemist, a smelter, an historian, an economist, an aesthete, etc.); quite to the contrary, it had stressed the usefulness of bringing out unexpected affinities between phenomena which no one had hitherto thought of comparing because they occurred at different organizational levels (inorganic matter, organic matter, ecology, society, free imagination, rigorous spec-

ulation, etc.). The purpose was therefore to determine a sort of denominator common to data which appeared to be contradictory save precisely that which in them remained hidden, because incompatible contexts assigned to the same unchanging challenge an unavoidably unpredictable solution. What this journal wanted was that an enquiry should start from the differences and arrive at the definition of a single problem.

The fact remains that relationships between scholars, established following interdisciplinary controversies, have indirectly, but considerably, increased "diagonal" preoccupations and given rise, for many investigators in most fields, to a change of perspective which may be decisive, and this through sheer force, that is because of the unity and definite character of the world.

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Its readers alone can appreciate the extent to which the journal has achieved its ambitions. It seems—curiously enough as this was impossible to foresee—to have accompanied, commented and encouraged by deed of its original tendencies and, by the way, without having really aimed at this, a change which is in the process of altering radically the traditional scientific approach and method. From its very beginning science has been the exact and verifiable study of that which is stable and general, of phenomena which exactly repeat themselves, provided the conditions are identical always and everywhere. It precludes that which is unique, occasional, and, even more, that which is turbulent and unusual. It went so far as to consider movement as a particular kind of inertia, which it needed an external force to accelerate, slow down or speed up, deviate or immobilize. It remained constant to its being and speed, save for stray intervention. Similarly, the second principle of thermodynamics only concerned closed systems, protected from the slightest exchange, addition or loss which would modify the economy of the system from the outside. A scientific law could therefore only concern a consolidated and permanent state, up to and including, through the regularity or the cycle of its pulsations, vibrations or oscillations. Here it happens that, for the advanced researchers, it is the opposite which occurs: they break away from those ordinations artificially—

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*and, to be precise, scientifically—obtained, filtered, clarified from incidences and interferences. Indeed, these organized, isolated, sheltered situations gave rise to a legislation, unchangeable to be true, which set out the most important and wide network of universal order. But which unavoidably also has the loosest mesh.*

*When considering the Nobel Prizewinners, in 1977, the year of this issue, one cannot but note that scientists favor just the opposite: we have for physics van Vleck, Mott and Anderson with their work on the amorphous and disordered—that is non-crystalline—states of matter; and for chemistry, Ilya Prigogine with his work on “dispersive structures.” Here a brutal palinode towards the idea of entropy, in other words the sacrosanct second principle of thermodynamics, foundation of classical physics, initiates a class of studies which both completes and contradicts it. Examination no longer bears on the spontaneous and fatal tendency of nature to the most disordered, and therefore the most undifferentiated state, for disorder is synonymous of undifferentiation. On the contrary, it urges the following of those developments which mean that, wherever life appears, it is the opposite which determines it, hence more order, complexity and liberty. A living organism is above all a symbiosis between organism and environment, therefore a whole a privileged part of which may develop and enrich itself, an increase in order compensated by an increase in disorder and a decrease in energy in all its surroundings. Hence, one cannot but note, as is pointed out in the Nobel Committee’s final report, that in chemistry as in physics concepts and experimentation “have gone far beyond traditional theories.” Thus, from now on, it is disorder, not order, which is in question, or rather the passage from disorder to order, of which it is imperative to discover the mechanism and explanation.*

*Everything happens as though science considers that it is time to turn to the study of a more intimate level of matter, the states of which are more active, disorderly, less restricted so to speak, less “pasteurized,” to those which for a long time had seemed less “scientific” than the others and which, even in their normal condition, ignored science. Statistical causality, assymetries, Brownian turmoil now take on an unexpected im-*

portance. Little by little is revealed the scope and significance of the so-called "crisis of determinism" which today, it is perceived, was not a sign of dismay, but rather the beginning of a new era, the start of a more meticulous vision of phenomena, which now included their individuality, not to say the limits of their fancy, and the possible "tricks" of particles.

A preliminary period must have been devoted to the elimination of the numerous parameters and effervescences which prevented that the threads of the inextricable bank be sorted out, all it contains which is furtive and occasional, which comes from luck—good or bad—is linked with a momentary absence or an unusual redundancy, in a word with any incident which not only unduly upset scientific regularity, but even prevented its being noted. The time has come when the very progress of science constrains it to take into consideration those irregularities it observes as recurrent in their turn, and the unpredictable quality of which must be formalized for science to continue its task.

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The exact sciences certainly do not belong to this journal. Nevertheless it never lost sight of them and has always considered them as a sure guide. Thus, long before Prigogine was awarded the Nobel Prize, and while he was practically unknown save to a highly-specialized circle, Diogenes had invited him to explain the meaning of his work and in which way it was revolutionary. In the human sciences, where confusion rather than exactness prevails, it is unavoidable that this review suffered from this and had been considered too cautious by some, too bold by others. In this it still remained faithful to its aim to analyze methods and results and release from them new perspectives. In linguistics as well in anthropology, in psychiatry as well as in political science, it endeavored to follow a similar attitude. Even in the study of art and poetry, it kept away from excesses of both detail and metaphysics: it tried to determine in the face of scientific ambition, what was the basis of their legitimacy as activities no less persistent and diffused, though varying not only in their manifestations, but also in their very functions.

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*In conclusion, has the time come to try and justify the title of Diogenes, which the journal adopted twenty-five years ago? Searching for man, it goes without saying, but also a commitment to prove, as he does, movement through progression, without allowing oneself to be blinded by Eleatic arguments, whilst not ignoring their theoretical scope. Progress remains the essential, as the bearing point for the conjectural lever Archimedes had deemed necessary to lift the world. However, Diogenes placed some affectation in living in a barrel rather than in a palace, thus pretending he does come nearer to nature. On this point, the review does not share its aponym's opinion. First of all, though a philosopher, Diogenes was also in any case still a part of nature. Then, as an intelligent man has pointed out, a barrel (or, to be more respectful towards archaeology, a giant amphora) is no less artificial than a palace.*

*This summarized the two rules which are and will go on being those followed by our publication: absolute priority to evidences; severe and ruthless scrutiny of that which, out of routine, seems evident but which finally is no more than a fallacious and inveterate prejudice.*

(Translated by Mary Fradier)