

TRENDS IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SCIENCE

BOSTON STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

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TRENDS IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SCIENCE

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PREFACE

The articles in this volume have been first presented during an international Conference organised by the Greek Society for the History of Science and Technology in June 1990 at Corfu. The Society was founded in 1989 and planned to hold a series of meetings to impress upon an audience comprised mainly by Greek students and scholars, the point that history of science is an autonomous discipline with its own plurality of approaches developed over the years as a result of long discussions and disputes within the community of historians of science.

The Conference took place at a time when more and more people came to realise that the future of the Greek Universities and Research Centres depends not only on the progress of the institutional reforms, but also very crucially on the establishment of new and modern subject areas. Though there have been significant steps towards such a direction in the physical sciences, mathematics and engineering, the situation in the so-called humanities has been, at best, confusing. Political expediencies of the post war years and ideological commitments to a glorious, yet very distant past, paralysed the development of the humanities and constrained them within a framework which could not allow much more than a philological approach.

Like in many other countries, the establishment of the history as well as the philosophy of science in Greece has been faced with strong opposition coming from two seemingly different sides. The first was from some quarters of the humanities, who wondered why all these questions cannot be part of the ongoing discussions in philosophy. It may have been a legitimate and arguable viewpoint, if the same people did not have exactly the same attitude for psychology, sociology, political science etc. The second opposition came from people who professed that history and philosophy of science give a bad image to the sciences, since these subjects are nothing but popularisations of science, and that, furthermore, they are practised by scientists who had been failures in their scientific careers. Though this was dominant attitude, there were notable exceptions whose unswerving stand was rather decisive in the developments concerning the founding of these disciplines in Greece.

The great majority of the arguments advanced in the papers of this volume adhere to what has been codified as the internalist approach to the

history of science. Such a choice does, by no means, imply that the organisers preferred this particular approach over any other. It was rather thought that the Corfu meeting will be followed by another one where the predominant *problematique* would be the externalist approach. There is no need whatsoever to elaborate on the differences between these two approaches. We do, though, want to stress that the differentiation has more of a historical and conventional justification and that neither of the two approaches can claim to be exclusively used for the analysis of any period or event in the history of science. What is to our mind a significant characteristic of these two approaches is their interdependence and the inherent pluralisms expressed in each one separately. This is why we would like to emphasise the word *Trends* in the title of the volume.

We have made an effort to include a fair number of papers examining the issues concerning the relation between philosophy and history of science. We feel that the discussion of this symbiotic relationship has always been beneficial in elucidating problems faced by each subdiscipline separately. Not all the approximately fifty papers presented at the meeting are included here. One in particular, Dr. Jens Hoyrup's paper "changing trends in the historiography of Babylonian mathematics" was far too long to be able to accommodate it in this volume.

The help of the Governing Body of the Ionian University and its President, Professor Elli Giotopoulou, had been absolutely decisive for the success of the Corfu meeting. We also thank the help we have received from the Technical Chamber of Greece and, especially, by its Secretary Mr. Stephanos Ioakimidis. The General Secretariat for Research and Technology, the Ministry of Education, The National Technical University of Athens and the University of Thessaloniki have also been generous in their help. Finally, we would like to thank two persons in particular who have been so very much supportive of all our activities concerning the history and philosophy of science in Greece. From our very first attempts to try to establish these disciplines in Greece, we have found an enthusiastic ally in Dr. Spiro Latsis with his continuous interest about the various developments and funding of some of our activities. The second person is Professor Robert S. Cohen who has managed from his rather unassuming headquarters at the University of Boston, to open channels of communication among so many members of the international community and to be so catalytic for the developments concerning the institutionalization of history and philosophy of science in so many countries. Finally we wish to thank our editors Annie Kuipers and Evelien

Bakker of Kluwer Academic Publishers for being so patient with us and so very efficient in the production of the volume.

October 1993

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JEAN CHRISTIANIDIS,
EFTHIMIOS NICOLAIDIS.**