

William R. Shea

Wissenschaftliche Revolutionen



Geboren 1937 in Gracefield, Quebec, Canada. Studium an der University of Ottawa, dem Gregorianum in Rom und der Cambridge University. Professor für Philosophie und Wissenschaftsgeschichte an der McGill University, Montreal. Generalsekretär der International Union of History and Philosophy of Science. Veröffentlichungen u. a.: *Galileo's Intellectual Revolution* (1972), *Reason, Experiment and Mysticism in the Scientific Revolution* (Hrsg. 1975); *Otto Hahn and the Rise of Nuclear Physics* (Hrsg. 1983); *The Magic of Numbers and Motion: The Scientific Career of Descartes* (1990). Adresse: Department of Philosophy, McGill University, 855 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 217, Canada.

I arrived at the Wissenschaftskolleg at the end of August 1989 with four minor and two major projects in various stages of preparation. The minor projects were the edition or co-edition of collections of essays by several authors on four different topics. The first one, entitled *Scientific Revolutions: their Meaning and Relevance*, appeared early in 1989, and will be followed by *Scientists and their Responsibilities* (co-edited with Beat Sitter) in November. *Creativity in the Arts and Sciences* (co-edited with Antonio Spadafora) and *Nature, Experiment, and the Sciences. Essays in Honour of Stillman Drake* (co-edited with Trevor H. Levere) will be published in February 1990. I contributed an essay to each of these four volumes.

I completed a small book on the Scientific Revolution which came out in Italian (Rome: Armando Editore) early in July and bears the title *Cartesio, Copernico, Galileo. Momenti della rivoluzione scientifica*. Another book, *The Magic of Numbers and Motion. The Scientific Career of René Descartes*, is almost ready for publication thanks to the dedication of Mrs. Firooza Kraft and her colleagues. It will appear in English, and, simultaneously, in Italian in the Spring of 1990. I have tried to reassess the development of Descartes' ideas about science, and to show the interplay between his mathematics, his physics, his philosophy, and his sympathy for some facets of seventeenth-century Hermeticism. Research was rendered virtually painless thanks to the skill and friendli-

ness of the Director of the library, Frau Gesine Bottomley, and her competent staff.

An unexpected but pleasant task was the organization of a Symposium at the Technische Universität with Prof. Wolfgang Muschik from whom I learned to think a little more rigorously about the theory of relativity. It was a privilege to be able to work with him. The Proceedings of the Symposium will be published from camera-ready typescripts in August.

During the current academic year, I lectured at the Freie Universität and the Technische Universität in Berlin, the Deutsches Museum in Munich, the University of Hamburg, and the University of Konstanz. I found all these opportunities extremely stimulating and rewarding. I also became involved with the European Science Foundation in setting up a European Network in the History of Science. I assisted to a modest extent my German colleagues in the preparation of the 18th International Congress of the History of Science that will be held in Hamburg and Munich, 1-9 August 1989.

An offshot of my stay in Berlin is the edition of a collection of essays, *Ideas, Ideals, and Ideologies*, to which several Fellows have contributed. This will appear in January 1991.

I have also begun collecting material for my next book, a study of the science of Blaise Pascal, and two articles with the provisional titles "Archimedes and Descartes: A Syracusan Victory," and "The Rhetoric of Science".

My long-range project remains a comprehensive study of the Scientific Revolution, and I feel that I have made some progress in this direction, thanks to the facilities offered by the Wissenschaftskolleg.