

The Finnish Society for the History of Science and Learning

VIII Jaakko Suolahti lecture 31.3.2016, Säätytalo

Opening Speech: Cecilia af Forselles

Members of the Society, Ladies and gentlemen!

The fact that the Society is celebrating its 50th anniversary gives this occasion a special meaning. We are celebrating not only the Society's history but also that the interest for the History of Science has an important role in the scientific world – at least that is, I presume, the way we want to think of this. In today's scientific atmosphere where specialization is key and research is developed to a level where scholars seldom are familiar with the history of their own field or knowledge of trends and paradigms in the development of science at large, a small society as ours have an important task to fulfil.

The history of science also represent the memory of science, why and how human knowledge about things has developed, and therefore it provides a key to the understanding of how science works and develops. Today I am happy to specially welcome our VIIIth Jaakko Suolahti lecturer professor Hasok Chang who has written very interestingly about "the progressive saga of scientific development", just to borrow some of his brilliant formulations.

Due to the Society's 50th anniversary I think it appropriate to briefly recall what happened 50 years ago. The Society was founded by several prominent researchers, like the professor in History at the University of Helsinki, Jaakko Suolahti(1918 - 1987), and the Philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright(1916-2003), at the present remembered with an excellent exhibition at the National Library, as we celebrate his 100th anniversary. I am happy that von Wright's role not only as a philosopher but also as one of the leading Nordic intellectuals is highlighted in the exhibition and in the new excellent publication *Georg Henrik von Wright, A Philosopher's Life*. Through von Wright's critical essays on the exploitation of nature, technological development, humanism, human rights, peace, and tolerance, he also became an influential and well known intellectual in society at large. But above all, he was Vice President of this society for some years.

The first President of the Society, professor Jaakko Suolahti was an eminent and well-known historian and researcher of antiquity. He was two years younger than von Wright so we will celebrate his 100th anniversary after two years, in 2018. Jaakko Suolahti, as von Wright, also grasped his role as an intellectual in a broader sense than the academic world required. Jaakko Suolahti was a charismatic educator and promoter of knowledge about the history of antiquity. He was professor in History at the University of Helsinki and his field of research was the social history of Rome.

In addition to his academic publications, he published several hundreds of popular articles in different papers and delivered several hundreds of popular broadcasts about antiquity and ancient culture. Suolahti made what's called General history a major academic field throughout the academic world in Finland. He was, for some years, also the Director of the Finnish Institute in Rome. The Finnish Institute in Rome was established 60 years ago as a base for Finnish students and researchers working in Italy.

It is grand to have the opportunity to begin the opening speech and introduction of the Society by remembering Jaakko Suolahti and von Wright. Above all it reminds us of in what kind of an atmosphere the Society was founded, and that societies have an important role as meeting places for intellectuals and people with an interest in different kinds of knowledge and scientific questions, and that societies in this way can have a broad intellectual significance. It also reminds us of that the intellectuals can have a wider role in society and that the scholars should not only have concern for their own affairs and research but be active in society and try to arouse interest in different kinds of questions that promote education and our civilization at large.

The mission of our society has been and still is:

- to promote and encourage the study of the history and development of different branches of science and knowledge, technology, and the humanities
- to serve as an uniting link between different branches of science and knowledge, to offer opportunities for their interaction as well as promote co-operation between them
- promote the study of the History of Learning in Finland
- to promote the distribution of knowledge of and reflection about the History of Science and Learning

The Society serves as a multidisciplinary forum for discussions promoting the study of the History of the Mind, Ideas, Learning, and Knowledge, as well as the history of different fields of science, ideologies, and Philosophy of Science.

The Society organizes lectures, seminars and conferences. In 2014 the Society hosted here in Helsinki the 26th Baltic Conference in History of Science with the theme 'Science as Profession'.

It is now time to present our lecturer, who we are very fortunate to have here today.

Professor Hasok Chang is today one of the most prominent researchers in the field of History of Science. He holds the Hans Rausing Professorship of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. He has also been President and Vice President of the British Society for History of Science (2011-2015) and a member of several other academic networks.

Professor Chang has focused on questions that are interesting both for the History and Philosophy of Science. He has researched the History of Physics and Chemistry from the 18th century onwards, publishing works on subjects such as the history of thermal physics, atomic-molecular chemistry, the Chemical Revolution, electrochemistry, and early quantum physics and relativity. In the philosophy of science his work has focused on topics such as realism, confirmation, measurement, pluralism and pragmatism.

Among his most well-known works are his two books, *Is Water H₂O? Evidence, Pluralism and Realism* (2012) and *Inventing Temperature: Measurement and Scientific Progress* (2004)

We will now hear professor Hasok Chang give the VIII Jaakko Suolahti lecture *Putting Science Back Into History of Science.*"