

From:

Michaelis AJ, *The Scientific Temper : An Anthology of Stories on Matters of Science*, Universiatsverlag C., Heidelberg, Winter 2001. p.1-598

My Friendship with Derek Price . Title 404

It is now more than 50 years ago that I met Derek Price, but I do not remember precisely where and when. We first came across each other perhaps as Editor and author, we first talked to each other in a formal relationship, not 'love at first sight'. He had just returned from his lectureship in Singapore, and I was finding my feet as an Editor, feeling proud in my new job at *Discovery*.

We had something in common right away, I had returned from Australia in 1954 and he from Singapore at the same time. There Price had met Cyril Parkinson of 'Parkinson's Law' fame, who was the Professor of Naval History at the University. From him, Derek got his first inspiration to study history. We must have talked a lot in London about the technological history of the Navy and its relationship to scientific invention as well as their influence on naval warfare, a subject about which he was very knowledgeable at that time. The history of science and of technology were to be one of our many common interests during the next 30 years of our friendship.

Derek was extremely gifted, with great charm for both men and women, when he chose to let it play, and above all ambitious. From his father, a Jewish Ashkenasi tailor in the East End of London, he had inherited no worldly goods, but a penetrating mind which brought Derek world renown in his two fields of History of Science and Scientometry. He could express himself with great ease and wit, he coined new phrases and words at the slightest provocation, and his neologism of "Big Science" in his book *Little Science, Big Science* (1963) became a world concept.

I could never equal him in these respects. What we both had in common was a love of collecting the 'antiquities of science' ranging from Astrolabes, antiquarian books, instruments and mostly the medals of science [Title 741. There I could excel Derek, as it was easier to follow this pursuit in London than in the USA, and often I was able to show Derek my finds, which he then explained to me in scholarly detail. We exchanged duplicates, whenever possible, and competed to acquire the best scientific antiques.

Our friendship was a close one, although it was based on intellectual scholarship, where he was the master and I his student. It lasted for 30 years, although an ocean often separated us. His erudition inspired me and I learnt much from him, not only in factual knowledge, but also in philosophical attitudes, greatly enriching my life in a way he had also fertilised so many others. His early death saddened me deeply, and I had to arrange his London cremation and funeral in 1983. Only a small plaque at the Golders Green Cemetery remains as a physical memento of this unique historian and great man of science. His numerous publications will serve as his lasting memorial.