



sent to Prof Leninha Valério do Nascimento - Director of ANAIS BRASILEIROS DE DERMATOLOGIA

Dear Editor,

It was an honor to receive the comments from Prof. Karl Holubar, from the Institute for the History of Medicine in the University of Vienna, regarding my recent editorial called *A Essência da Ciência* (The Essence of Science). It is a special pleasure to receive his support in my historical discussion about the impact of the Royal Society of London in the development of science, as we know today. However, my editorial was prepared not as a historical review but only as a opportunity to use an historical fact to point out how important it was to the modern view of a scientific periodical.

I agree with Prof. Holubar's review about some previous scientific societies in Europe such as the two important national academies, the French and the German ones, as well as the *Accademia dei Lincei*, that has just completed 400 years of history. However, I do think that the Royal Society represents a special situation, far from all those ancient and influent academies, because of the paradigm that always coordinated its history and contribution to science.

Let's take the example of the *Accademia dei Lincei*, founded in 1603, by a mathematician (Francesco Stelutti), a philosopher (Johannes van Heeck), and a botanic scientist (Federico Cesi).<sup>1</sup> All the original founders and the first members were from very rich families and the academy only last for 50 years (until 1653); *Accademia dei Lincei* was reorganized after the second half of the XVII century and has been working without new interruptions since then.<sup>1</sup> Another example is the Pinelli Circle, founded even before *Accademia dei Lincei*, in 1590 by a very rich merchant called Gianvincenzo Pinelli, a great friend of Galileu Galilei.<sup>1</sup> The *Académie of Sciences*, for instance, the French counterpart of the Royal Society, was from the very beginning a scientific branch of the French government, according to Pyenson *et al.*<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Society of London was, of course, also an elitist academy on its beginnings, but much more democratic than the *Académie of Sciences* according to White;<sup>3</sup> it was founded by scientists from many areas and an official background from the British royalty was a posterior characteristic of its organization.<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning many scientists with a very poor origin, such as Joseph Priestley, were accepted in the Royal Society.<sup>3</sup> Another important point, a crucial one for my original editorial, is that the Royal Society of London organized a quite modern periodical, the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, that is still an important scientific periodical nowadays.

My evaluation of the influence and impact of the Royal Society in the modern science was far from a simple compilation of dates of foundations and a list of important members. It was much more a reflection about how important for a scientific periodical was the work of so many brilliant scientists during the last centuries of our history. Those scientists came not only from the Royal Society of London but also from *Accademia dei Lincei* from Italy, *Académie of Sciences* from France, the *Leopoldina's Academy* from Germany and from many other important scientific institutions around the world. The special highlight of the Royal Society during my previous comments was due to the special longevity and quality of its scientific production, but especially because of its democratic philosophy from the very beginning, something quite new in 1662.

The *Essência da Ciência* does not belong to any national academy of science or even to any individual. It is a heritage of many centuries of hard work and the knowledge that we still don't know enough about ourselves. It is a truly privilege to have, during our journey, the company of so many and special minds to help us on the long way.

Omar Lupi, MD, PhD  
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#### REFERÊNCIAS / REFERENCES

1. Pyenson S, Sheets-Pyenson S. Servants of Nature: A History of Scientific Institutions. Enterprises and Sensibilities. London, Harper Collins, 1999, p.87.
2. White M. Rivalidades Produtivas. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Record, 2001, p.94.
3. Sobel D. A Filha de Galileu. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000, p.210.