It is a great honor and a great pleasure for me to welcome Prof. Hartmann Tyrell here as the recipient of the George-Sarton-Medal of Ghent University. This award was instituted exactly 25 years ago, at the centenary of Sarton’s birthday. The first award of the Sarton committee was accepted by a former student of Sarton, named Robert King Merton. Merton wrote his Ph.D. under the supervision of Sarton, this work “Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England” was published as a monograph in Osiris, a periodical also run by Sarton. In the academic year 1986/87, Merton delivered his inaugural lecture here on the Matthew effect in science. Hartmann Tyrell only is the second sociologist to receive this award of the Sarton committee. And he is a well-deserved successor to Merton.

Hartmann Tyrell spent most of his academic career at the University of Bielefeld (Germany). This university was established in the second half of the 1960s; it was explicitly conceived of as a research university. From the onset, it also put a premium on history and sociology. Both history and sociology were and are not simple university departments, they constitute large and independent faculties. Both faculties were also able to recruit the best staff and attract the best students. It is no coincidence that the first sociologist to receive a honorary doctoral degree from Ghent University was a Bielefeld professor, namely Niklas Luhmann. Hartmann Tyrell lectured at the University of Bielefeld for nearly four decades. He has introduced generation after generation into the history and theory of sociology. He must have given countless lectures on Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and other classical sociol-
ogists. Even now, in the first years after his retirement, he continues to lecture in this domain. As few others, and I have often seen it myself (although I have never been a student of him), Hartmann Tyrell is able to stimulate interest in the history of the discipline and to motivate people to devote their efforts to work within this domain. He can be an unrelenting and sharp critic, also of the work of young researchers, but for them his remarks often constitute a difference which makes a difference.

In the past 40 or so years, Hartmann Tyrell has published influential work – perhaps especially on processes of social differentiation and historical change, on the one hand, and on sociology around 1900, on the other. His most important papers were recently reprinted in the volume *Soziale und Gesellschaftliche Differenzierung*. But his contributions to science work in a direct as well as in an indirect way. For almost a decade, until his retirement, he was also the editor-in-chief of the leading German journal in the field, the *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*. In this regard, his profile is highly similar to that of George Sarton, who was also the editor of main scholarly outlets, namely the journal *Isis* and the companion yearbook *Osiris*. These journals facilitate the communication of research findings. They bring together a research community, they stimulate interchanges, they set standards, they define themes. This editorial work is often less visible – but when it is well-done, its scientific relevance cannot be underestimated. In this regard, too, Hartmann Tyrell deserves much praise. There are not many colleagues, who primarily define their own role in terms of facilitating the scholarship of others.

Let me finally also say something about the Department of Sociology here in Ghent. The Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, of which it is part, is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary. The social sciences existed in Ghent before the 1990s, but they were part of the Faculty of Law. The ‘emancipation’ from the Faculty of Law in the early 1990s facilitated the growth and expansion of Sociology and other departments. We need to thank Herman Brutsaert, Hilary Page and others, because they made this consolidation possible. We also need to thank John Vincke, who was head of the Department of Sociology and dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences until 2009, when he died much too early. This room is

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dedicated to his memory. John Vincke saw the expansion of the Department as an opportunity to create a more balanced composition of its research and teaching staff. In recent years, the Department of Sociology has been able to establish a strong interest in social theory, in sociology of science, in the history of sociology. In the near future, we hope to be able to continue working in these domains. We also sincerely hope that we will remain able to rely on Hartmann Tyrell for critical advice.
History and Sociology – Some Encounters

Hartmann Tyrell

Please allow me to start with some words about myself and the places in which I grew up. I was born in Dresden, in Saxonia; I am however a Westphalian. That can already be seen when you look at the three cities, with which my life was most strongly connected. Dortmund, where I grew up, and whose football team still counts me among its fans (at present particularly!), Muenster, the city, in which I studied sociology, history and history of art, and Bielefeld, where I worked in the Faculty of Sociology for far more than thirty years. In the nineties this University also attracted and pulled Raf Vanderstraeten, now my Ghentian colleague. I must add, what concerns Bielefeld: The Bielefeld University is a comparatively young one, it was founded in the 1960s. The first professor, who was appointed at this university, was a sociologist, namely Niklas Luhmann. I can say: already in Muenster I attended his lectures and was his student. In Bielefeld, too, I remained in good contact with him. We were always part of the same research group. But I was never a pure system theoretician, although I owe the major topic of my research work – social differentiation – to Niklas Luhmann. That your University awarded him a Honorary Doctoral Degree in the year 1984 was proudly registered in Bielefeld.

Westphalia certainly is not one of the most important German regions. But it was at the center of European politics in 1648, when the Westphalian Peace was negotiated. Meanwhile, we live as is well-known in a ‘post-westphalian era’. Compared to the Low Countries, particularly their southern part, Westphalia has always been situated in the periphery – especially in cultural regard. My brother and I visited this culturally central
region (north of the Alps) in 1964. We undertook from Dortmund a cycling tour to and through Belgium. For us Belgium was at that time the cycling nation par excellence, not only because of the Dortmund six days. We passionately collected autographs! It was still the time before Eddy Merckx, it was the time of Rik van Steenberghen!

As students of history, we both wanted to visit Flanders, particularly the Flemish cities which were metropolitan cities in the period of “the waning of the Middle Ages” and in the early-modern era: Ghent and Bruges (as well as Ypres, which was terribly destroyed in the First World War) already in medieval times, later Antwerp. The important historians of the late Middle Ages we were familiar with, were Johan Huizinga and Henri Pirenne – the latter particularly as the analyst of class conflicts and social revolts in the proto-industrial context of these cities. I personally was also very fascinated by “the early netherlandish painting” – in the works of Jan van Eyck, Rogier who called himself “de la Pasture” in Tournai and “van der Weyden” in Brussels, for Hugo van der Goes and the others. In Germany, Hans Belting speaks today in view of this generation of artists of “the invention of painting in the Netherlands”. It remains astonishing how this beautiful art could be produced in an era which was so full of conflict and upheaval.

I will not dwell on such forms of astonishment. But let me briefly report about three surprises, which happened to me in the course of the last year. I thus take an egocentrical point of departure. Instead of surprise one can also speak of „transformation”, of the wondrous transformation from preceding ignorance to knowledge. Surprises are only possible when one does not know or expect something. But one only learns about this ignorance – in the case of the true surprise – in retrospect. In terms of Immanuel Kant, this might be a self-indebted ignorance, but it might also be a legitimate unawareness, which cannot be blamed on the person who is unaware of, or ignorant about, something.

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1 See H. Pirenne, Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Europas im Mittelalter. Tübingen / Basel 1946.
Now to my three ignorances. The first in my view is a legitimate one. How could I expect that someone in the beautiful center of Ghent would come upon the idea to confer to me, who comes from the westphalian periphery, the honor which is conferred upon me today? Of course, I knew Raf Vanderstraeten, the very estimated colleague and friend from Bielefeld and other times, who was appointed here not so long ago. Somewhat how he could have something to do with what happens today. You see once more: the human alter ego, even if you feel yourself familiar and befriend with him, he remains always strange, somewhat transcendental, to whose original intentions and thoughts you never have immediate access. Social Phenomenology speaks here of the problem of inter-subjectivity; Georg Simmel speaks of secrecy, because the alter ego can remain a silent one. And you can always be surprised by him. If this is already the case in the relation with the familiar Other, how much more reasons to be surprised in relation to the many unknown members of this Faculty. So I think I am completely innocent regarding today’s surprise. The more so, why I can discover only little on my side, what lets me be worthy of the honor you bestow on me. All the more cause to thank most sincerely for this honor.

This brings me to my second surprise. It has to do with my ignorance, regarding the two historians already mentioned, namely Pirenne and Huizinga. With both, I stayed in touch during my training as sociologist: with Pirenne for example in the context of the sociology of organizations, especially in relation to his discussions of medieval corporations and early forms of modern organizations. And with Huizinga in the context of the sociology of conflict; in regard to the nearly incomprehensible density of conflicts during the Middle Ages – not at least the “partijstrijd” – he explicitly asks for a sociological explanation. Maybe he alluded to Georg Simmel’s famous essay on “Der Streit” (engl. “the conflict”). And it was Norbert Elias, who in the 1930th – in the context of his civilization theory.

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– took up Huizinga’s challenge and provided a sociological answer to Huizinga’s question.⁵

And now the surprise begins: Pirenne and Huizinga have themselves become a case for historians. In recent years, there has appeared a lot of historical work on both authors, and on the relationship between both authors.⁶ I will now – in adoration for the *genius loci* – only briefly speak about *Henri Pirenne*, who wrote the history of his own nation. He saw its cultural identity above all “in that Mixture of Romanism and Germanism” and in the mutual relations between both.

Thus to my ignorance: the tragic of Pirennes relationship to Germany remained unknown for me until last year, and I owe it to you that it is now remedied. Nothing did I know about the early, close and friendly connection to *Karl Lamprecht* and Leipzig⁷, nothing about the fact that the first volume of his History of Belgium appeared in 1899 first of all in German⁸, nothing about the ‘diplomatic’ role of Pirenne in-between German and French historians before 1914, nothing about his resistance against the German occupation of Belgium from 1914 onwards, nothing about his open resistance against the German language politics (*Flamenpolitik*), especially about your university, nothing about Pirennes deportation and his internment in Germany until the end of the First World War, nothing finally about his complete break with Germany in 1918. Pirennes break with Germany was reflected, as is often said, in his view upon Europe’s history, especially concerning Belgium; as Tollebeeks says: “Belgium no longer lay between Romanic France and Germanic Germany, but belonged

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completely to the Western Europe of France and Great Britain”. The intellectual costs of this interruption of contact with Germany are both high and unfortunate. They concern the relationship of history and sociology, too. What hurts me as a Weberian, is that the Pirenne of the after war period, as far as I can see, couldn’t make himself familiar with the work of Max Weber. Weber’s work became available in the form of books only in the 1920s. How much, however, we would not have liked to read a judgment of Pirenne, who was the author of *Medieval Cities* (1925), about Max Weber’s reflections on “the sociology of the city”! In Weber’s comparative and historical sociology, as you may know, the type of the medieval city, north and south of the Alps, plays a crucial role.

Due to the German invasion and occupation of Belgium, the biography of Pirenne drifted away from the intra-European equilibrium, by which it was so strongly determined until 1914. The German mistreatment of his person and of his country turned the ‘natural’ mediator and European scholar of Belgian nationality into a West-European citizen, who turned his back towards Germany and its once so admired universities. My unawareness of all this was self-indebted, if I may say so. For the historians in Germany, Pirenne is still read today. His *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (1936) – a book, which re-raised the question of the periodization between Antiquity and the Middle Ages – was reprinted in Germany in 1985. This reprint contains a long and instructive epilog by Dan Diner, and therein Pirenne’s German misfortune is explicitly dealt with. Well-known in Germany, too, is Pirenne’s important role in the 1920s in the *Annales*-project, as the interlocutor of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, who, for their part, were connected with the sociology of the Durkheim school. Above all, the book of Cinzio Violante, which discusses “the break in the academic world of Europe” during the First World War so impressively, and which uses the

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personal and intellectual fate of Henri Pirenne to illustrate this break, is since 2004 also available in a German translation – from Italian. It affects me, as a historically-interested human being, deeply that the university of Pirenne honors someone like me, who comes from the other side of the Rhine, with the Sarton medal. If one thinks about what happened one hundred years ago, there is really good reason for being astonished. It is part of the ironies of history that today’s academic ceremony takes place in a united Europe, but also in Belgium, in a country whose national identity seems presently to be in dissolution. And further: that this happens at the University of Ghent, where one is entitled to speak and teach in Flemish, and where English is used during transnational ceremonies.

Let me now come to my third surprise, which came over me last year. I must add immediately: I actually do not speak about one, but about a whole series of surprises and novelties for me. First of all: I knew ISIS, the famous journal of history of science, but of George Sarton, its founder and editor for many years, I knew at best his name. What was completely unknown to me was that the journal was founded in 1913. The second volume was published in June (!) 1914, but it does not yet anticipate anything about the outbreak of the war, which was then so near. The first volume bears the sub-title: “Revue consacrée à l’histoire de la science, publiée par George Sarton”. The place of publication is Wondelgem-lez-Gand. Unknown to me was also Sarton’s strong (patriotic) attachment to Adolphe Quetelet (who held a doctorate from Ghent University) as “the founder of sociology”. He questioned that Auguste Comte could claim that role. Furthermore: OSIRIS, too, the book series in history of science, was not unknown to me. And, of course, I knew of the Ph.D. thesis of the twentieth century sociologist Robert King Merton, entitled Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England that was published in 1938. But I did not know that he wrote it in Harvard under the supervision of Sarton, and that it was published in volume IV of OSIRIS. Finally: which sociologist does not know Merton’s essay The Matthew Effect in Science from 1968? Also The Matthew Effect in Science, II, published in 1988, which contains important reflections on the problem of “intellectual property”, was not unknown onto me. But I was unaware of the occasion in

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November 1984, which inspired this text. This occasion was the celebration of the “birth of George Sarton a hundred years ago” here in Ghent. *The Matthew effect in science, II* was Merton’s inaugural lecture, in November 1986, as the first George Sarton Chair of your University.14

Let me now finally say some words about the three data, which I mentioned: 1913/1914, 1938, 1984/86. These considerations again have in view the encounters of history and sociology. 

To the first date: 1913/14. It is from the point of view of the history of science probably a singular case that the emergence of one discipline is, I exaggerate only a bit, the project and the work of one man and his journal. For science history, this may be claimed and one may add: ISIS was until the 1930s the private property of George Sarton, its founder and editor.15 If one looks back on the year of its foundation – thus on the first two volumes of ISIS (1913, 1914) –, then two things need to be underlined. That is, on the one side, the explicit and Europe-wide claim to *internationality* of this journal. The styling of the journal’s first issues is a French one and Sarton writes in French, of course, but ISIS invites authors from everywhere in Europe and offers them the possibility to write in their own language. Consequently one finds in the first two volumes contributions in French, English, Italian and German language (although nothing in Dutch, if I have not overseen something!). Here Belgium’s mediating role within Europe’s academic world – until 1914! – shows up again and impressively. What is remarkable, on the other side, is the broad disciplinary range addressed by ISIS: historians where of course included, but also sociologists. Among the members of the “Comité de Patronage” you find for example Karl Lamprecht, but also Émile Durkheim. And Sarton’s introductory essay *Histoire de la science* not only invites contributions from historians and philosophers, but explicitly also from sociologists.

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Sarton was also a person, who could not live with the German occupation of Belgium during the First World War. He fled the country; his way led him – via Great Britain, where his wife came from – into the USA. But he did not give up ISIS; the journal started to appear again in 1920, and again it was produced on Belgian soil, in Brussels. Volume III is still largely a French one, but from volume IV onwards, ISIS is presented as “International Review devoted to the History of Science and Civilization”. And both elements are remarkable: the stress on internationality (after the world war and against it) as well as the addition of Civilization and thus the expansion of the journal in the direction of cultural history, giving more room to sociology. And Sarton becomes now, in his own journal, an English writing author.

To the second date: 1938. Merton has described in much detail how he, as a student of sociology, got into contact with George Sarton. He has described his own Harvard history so entertainingly – and he has told it here in Ghent – that any re-telling of his story is forbidden. Important here is only: the “young sociologist-in-the-making” – with his research plans in the history and sociology of science – felt encouraged and supported by Sarton. You know to what it lead to: regarding the genesis of modern Capitalism we have the Weber thesis, regarding the beginnings of modern Science we have the Merton Thesis. Both Weber and Merton direct their attention to the Puritans in England in the 17th century. And Merton therein felt encouraged by Max Weber; he built upon Weber’s Protestant Ethic and quoted not from Parsons’ English translation, but from the German edition of 1920.

At this place, I am able to offer you a small novelty – probably the only one, which this lecture has to communicate. [I leave aside the fact that Merton put much emphasis on the notion of ‘secularization’ (which is only hardly used in Weber’s writings)]. On one place, Merton is disappointed in Max Weber, namely concerning the central relationship between Puritanism and “science and technology”. He had expected more explicit support from Weber. Weber, in his view, merely spoke of the “possibility of such a connection”. This disappoints Merton. But Weber is far more on his side than he thinks. In a footnote, Merton quotes from one of Weber’s many

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footnotes. The crucial Weber sentence, as Merton quotes it, goes like this: “Auf die Bedeutung [des Puritanismus] für die Entwicklung der Technik und der empirischen Wissenschaft kommen wir nicht zu sprechen.” 17 Merton, however, overlooked one word. Weber wrote: “kommen wir hier nicht zu sprechen.” (komen wij hier niet te spreken!) 18 From what follows in the footnote, it is evident that the connection was clear and unambiguous according to Weber. But more still! You must know: the Protestant Ethic is a fragment, it is an unfinished work. Originally much more was planned – also with regard to science and technology. This can be seen, when the first version of the Protestant Ethic, which dates from 1904/5, is taken into account. Here one reads at the relevant page: “Auf die Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Technik und der empirischen Wissenschaften kommen wir später [later] zu sprechen.” 19 Weber had thus in mind what Merton later accomplished – surely in a more elaborate way. The concluding remarks of the Protestant Ethic also indicate Weber’s project. 20 But as so many of Weber’s projects, this one too was not realized. In one word: Weber provides much more support for the Merton thesis, than Merton himself has noticed!

To the third date: 1984/86. Everything, what I want to say about this date, took place in Ghent. What Merton spoke about, can be found in ISIS (1985, 1988), but, as mentioned before, it also appeared in the first volume of the Sartoniana. The foreigner, who I am, cannot comment on that! One thing can be added, however: with Robert King Merton, you honoured at that time a Giant in the field of sociology – and not only in sociology. His relevance for the sociology of science, especially the historical sociology of science, is from my point of view as large as the relevance of Sarton for the history of science – and it is probably of more lasting relevance. We may add: the centennial of Merton’s birthday was celebrated at several places last year. In Germany, the Berliner Journal für Soziologie used this anniversary to dedicate a special issue to Merton. This issue opens with the German translation of The Matthew effect in science, II, taken over from

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17 Merton, op. cit., p. 59, n. 9.
18 Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionsoziologie I. Tübingen 1920, p. 188, n. 2.
ISIS 79, 1988. The award of the George Sarton Chair in Ghent is explicitly mentioned as inspiration for this text.  

What remains to be said? I think of two things! First, one other small surprise for me: Merton’s most beautiful book – the fans call it OTSOG (“On the Shoulders of Giants”) – was stimulated by Sarton. The first publication *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants* – and used by Merton – dates from 1935; its author is George Sarton, who starts his historical search, as Merton did later, from Newton’s use of the aphorism. Sarton understood it as a metaphor for scientific progress; as all of you know: a dwarf on the giants shoulder may look farther than the giant.  

Secondly and finally: with Robert King Merton, you have honored one of the giants of science; with me, you honor one of its smaller dwarfs, who does not think that he looks very much farther than Merton did. But it fulfills me with extraordinary pride, even with euphoria, to be found worthy of succeeding him as the next sociologist to receive the Sarton-Medal. 

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