

Heinz von Foerster Lecture '14

# Bernard Scott

## Beyond Dogma Heinz von Foerster's Responsibilities of Competence

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Universität Wien  
Campus Altes AKH / Aula  
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am Institut für Zeitgeschichte  
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**in Kooperation  
mit dem**

**Institut für Zeitgeschichte der Universität Wien**

In his 1972 paper, "Responsibilities of Competence", Heinz von Foerster calls on cyberneticians to accept their responsibilities for the realities they construct and to use their competencies as cyberneticians to act for the good. In my lecture, I review the thinking that led Heinz to make this call. I then briefly overview, as best I can holistically and globally, the many problems for which call for the competencies of the cybernetician. These problems can be usefully distinguished as first and second order problems. I focus on the second order problems that are presented by pathological belief systems: of which I distinguish two kinds: "individualism" and "the dogmas of collectives". I review some of the main forms that these pathologies may take. Using concepts from cybernetics as a foundation, I go on to argue that, although these pathologies may never be fully eradicated from human thinking and ways of behaving, they can be minimised by education of the right kind: education for cybernetic enlightenment.

Bernard Scott

Dr Bernard Scott graduated from Brunel University, UK, in 1968 with a first class honours degree in Psychology. He completed a Ph.D. in Cybernetics from the same university in 1976. His supervisor was Gordon Pask, with whom he worked between 1967 and 1978. Bernard is former Head of the Flexible Learning Support Centre, UK Defence Academy and former Reader in Cybernetics, Cranfield University, UK. He retired from these positions in August, 2009, and September, 2010, respectively. He now works as an independent researcher. He holds an honorary position as Senior Research Fellow with the Center for Sociocybernetics Studies, Bonn. Bernard is a Fellow and founder member of the U.K.'s Cybernetics Society. He is an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the American Society for Cybernetics and an Academician of the International Academy of Systems and Cybernetics Sciences. Bernard is Past President of Research Committee 51 (on Sociocybernetics) of the International Sociological Association. In 2013, Bernard was presented with the McCulloch Award by the American Society for Cybernetics.

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