Valediction: Sad to Leave – But Happy to Go

In my lectures to students and talks to lay audiences on the topic of “Successful Aging,” I always emphasize the importance to carefully prepare ourselves during the second, professionally active period of life for the third age, when most of us are still in reasonably good physical and intellectual condition (see, e.g., a talk I gave in 2018, <https://youtu.be/cRKUvFXueMM>).

From this gerontological point of view, being offered the Editorship of *Gerontology* in the year 2007 came exactly at the right time. In congruence with the establishment of my new, fully grant-supported lab as a professor emeritus, the Laboratory of Autoimmunity at our Medical University in Innsbruck, Austria, I was thus able to perfectly shape my third age for the decade ahead. I had, however, already decided at that time to both, close my lab and step down from the position of the Editor-in-Chief of *Gerontology* when having reached my 80th year of life. This biological and self-imposed threshold has now been reached and it is therefore time to say goodbye.

As it happens, the floor above my office harbours our Clinic of Medical Psychotherapy. Thus, I constantly run into a lot of psychologists. One day, I asked the head of this clinic why one of my strengths seems to be my ease to let loose. He explained that this is due to the fact that I always already look forward to new horizons. Although these horizons become much narrower with increasing age, there may be a grain of truth in this statement.

As implied by the subtitle of this valediction, I am, of course, sad to leave a most interesting, rewarding and challenging activity, but also happy to enter a period of a few more years with less responsibilities and time pressures, but still being engaged in some clinical and experimental work, staying abreast in the scientific literature,

give occasional lectures to our PhD students and talks at conferences. I also look forward to continuing practicing my hobbies, such as cultural events, sports, travelling and playing the accordion. Most importantly, I will spend even more time with my wife and the families of our 5 children.

During the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, we have achieved the greatest gift to mankind, i.e., the gain of more than 30 additional years of life. This tremendous gain of lifetime was due to the overwhelming speed of cultural evolution that by far outpaces biological evolution. However, we must always keep in mind that – unfortunately – this prolonged human lifetime comes at the expense of many other creatures of this beautiful, endangered world!

Gerontology as the oldest journal in the field with the broadest scope of gerontological issues in its portfolio was an integral part of this development since its foundation in the year 1957. I had the privilege to be a close observer of this human success story during the past 12 years as the Editor-in-Chief of *Gerontology*. This was only possible by attracting top quality manuscripts for all sections of the journal with the help of an outstanding Editorial crew and the competent, professional and friendly cooperation with the Karger publishing house. In leaving the Editorial office of *Gerontology*, I want to thank all the numerous people who have made this success possible. Space does not permit to mention all former and present Section Editors, members of the Editorial Board and reliable administrative staff. I would, however, like to take this opportunity to personally mention the excellent cooperation with and friendship of Günter Lepperdinger as the Managing Editor, Christine Süss as the heart of the Editorial Office since the start of my editorship, the donation

of time and expertise by the many reviewers who guaranteed the high scientific standard of our journal, the understanding and support of the Karger family and especially the constant interest and gentlemanly help of Thomas Nold, the person responsible for *Gerontology* at the publishing house in Basel.

Finally, I must apologize to all those whom I may have offended during my editorship, including the disappointed authors of manuscripts we had to reject. I do, of course, know from my own experience that all these papers were written with “heart blood,” but as the Editor-in-Chief of a scientific journal, one is occasionally forced to make hard decisions.

Looking back, some important formal changes had been brought into effect during my Editorship.

(a) The cover picture of the journal depicting a wheelchair has immediately been changed to a scheme of apoptosis.

(b) In addition to the three pre-existing sections, i.e., Clinical, Experimental and Behavioural, a further section was established, dealing with Regenerative and Technical aspects of gerontology, respectively.

(c) New, additional formats of manuscripts were introduced, i.e., “Mini-Reviews,” “Viewpoints” and “De-

bates” and occasional articles “of General Interest,” with continuous solicitation of contributions to these formats by prominent research groups.

(d) The ever-increasing quality of work published in *Gerontology* was also reflected by a significant, steady rise of the Impact Factor. This fact, in combination with fast and fair manuscript processing entailed a challenging increase of submissions that resulted in a rather low acceptance rate of about 10–15%.

Starting in 2020, Tamas Fülöp, MD, PhD, Professor of Medicine and Geriatrics and Senior Researcher at the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, will be the new Editor-in-Chief. He has served the journal as an Editorial Board member for several years and I am sure that he is a perfect candidate.

Together with Karger Publishers, we have agreed on a smooth and professionally carried out transition of editorial tasks.

Leading *Gerontology* was an honour, a very satisfactory task that broadened my gerontological horizon – and great fun. So, before being carried out of the Editorial office on a stretcher, I thank all of you for a wonderful time, hope that I can stay in contact with some of you, wish you good luck, and say goodbye.

Georg Wick, Innsbruck