

Obituary

Manfred Kochen (1928 – 1989)



We particularly seek contributors likely to have a positive effect on the practice of human management toward a deeper understanding of what makes it human.

Manfred Kochen

Manfred Kochen, one of the three Founding Editors of *Human Systems Management*, has died suddenly and unexpectedly in Hawaii on January 7, 1989. Fred became Managing Editor for the *Coping with Social Complexity* section from February 1980 and they served diligently as the sole HSM Managing Editor until the very end of 1988.

HSM readers, authors and editors shall miss his quiet work and dedication to make this journal work. It was not given to him to see HSM flourish. It will weigh on all of us heavily to make HSM grow, in Fred's memory.

Without Fred Kochen there would be no HSM.

Manfred Kochen was born on July 4, 1928 in Vienna, Austria. He was educated at M.I.T. (B.S., 1950) and Columbia University (M.A., 1951; Ph.D., 1955) in New York City. His doctorate was in applied mathematics and during the 1953–55 period he worked in the Electronic Computer Project under John von Neumann at the Institute for Advanced Study. In 1955–56 Fred studied mathematical models in the behavioral sciences at Harvard University.

In 1956 Fred joined the IBM Research Center at Yorktown Heights as a research scientist. In 1960

he became a manager of the information science project.

In 1965, he joined the faculty of the University of Michigan where, in 1972, he became Professor of Information Science. He has also held joint appointments at the Graduate School of Business (adjunct professor of computer and information systems) and the Mental Health Research Institute (research mathematician). In 1974 he spent a year at ISPRA in Italy as a visiting expert with Euroatom.

Manfred's major interests included the learning processes of individuals and communities, and his competence was in mathematical modeling: probability theory, fuzzy sets, algorithms and formal logic and computers. He called himself a professional information scientist and as such he was very proud of his book *Toward a Theory of Decentralization* with Czech-born Karl W. Deutsch.

In 1975 Fred edited a volume entitled *Information for Action: From Knowledge to Wisdom* (Academic Press, New York) and that's why we met and why we started cooperating on HSM (which itself started as *HSM Co-enzyme* around 1976).

Fred Kochen served as editor of the *Journal of the ACM* and *Behavioral Science* and on the editorial boards of a number of international journals. He was active in the American Society for Information Science (ASIS) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Recently, Fred Kochen edited the *Advances in Cognitive Science* (with H.M. Hastings, Westview Press, Boulder, 1988). In that volume he presented his last papers: 'Order and Disorder in Knowledge Structures,' and, with Robert K. Lindsay, 'Novelty and Redundancy in Problem Solving.' In both, he was trying to bring creativity into expert systems.

His very last and now unfinished project con-

cerned the 8th International Congress of Cybernetics and Systems (New York City, June 11–15, 1990), for which he organized a symposium entitled 'Toward a Science of Mind and its Analogs,' with Arthur Kornberg, Gerald Edelman, Joshua Lederberg and Herbert Simon among participants. It is our sincere hope and belief that this 'Fred's Symposium' will take place in his honor and memory.

I have associated and travelled with Fred and his charming and gentle wife Paula all around the world: Copenhagen, Acapulco, Guangzhou, Tokyo, . . . Fred was quiet, with a shy tentative smile, always trying to help, rarely asking for help; barely hiding the 'Weltschmerz' that all of us from the Viennas, Budapests, Pragues, Kievs and Cracows of this world are sometimes trying to hide. We should not. We are the von Bertalanffys, von Neumanns, Deutsches, Morgensterns, Jantsches, Klirs, Druckers, Machlups, Weisses, von Glasersfelds, Rapoport, Jurans, Friedmans, Polanyis, Koestlers, Katonas, von Foersterns, von Hayeks, Svobodas, Laszlos, Marschaks, Gödels, Békésys, Fellners, Keménys, Blaus, Lukácses, Rostows, Kármáns, Szent-Györgys, Szilards, Tellers, Vázsonyis, Mengers, Schlicks, Lazarsfelds, Machs, Schumpeters, Leontieffs, Domars, Festingers, Maslows, Miseses . . . and Kochens of this world and we have a plenty to offer, in spite of our seemingly endless pains and frustrations. We are intuitive and natural systems-thinking people: there is not a reductionist among us. None.

Our dream was to turn the traditional western management paradigm around: away from hier-

archy, dictate, rigidity, specialization and management of numbers towards self-management, creative participation, flexibility, integrated knowledge and leadership of human beings. We were too early. Only in the nineties will the determined HSM effort start falling on more fertile grounds of declining illiteracy, innumeracy and degrading ahistoricity of the U.S. management theory and practice. It is deadly and unworthy of the collective human spirit to be left behind, 'holding the bag', but it is frustrating and damaging to the individual human spirit to be ahead of the times or to march to a different and still so distant drummer.

Fred is now gone and I remain: so it is now up to me to shout away our shared frustration, frustration sometimes so intense that it can kill us.

Milan ZELENY

**Professor Manfred Kochen
Lectureship**

The University of Michigan Mental Health Research Institute will establish a fund in the name of the late Professor Manfred Kochen, to be used for a lecture in his honor, in an area of research that typified his career interests during his life. It is planned that the first such lecture will take place in the fall of 1990.

Please make contributions payable to the University of Michigan, designate Kochen Lecture and address them to:

Mental Health Research Institute
205 Washtenaw Place
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-0720