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Obituary

Germinal Cocho

ADONIS GERMINAL COCHO GIL was born in Madrid on International Workers Day in 1933 and passed away in Mexico City last year on the anniversary of the Allied victory over the Nazi Germany. Two extraordinary dates mark the vital interval of this extraordinary man. His father, a republican lawyer could not have greater success in naming him Germinal, which is the seventh month of the French revolutionary calendar, marking the start of the season when the seeds in the soil germinate. That was the passage through this world of this "Mexican with Hispanic origin scientist" as he defined himself.

The first years of his life were marked by the turbulence of the Civil War in Spain. In 1936, a Falangist picket arrested and shot his grandfather for the sole crime of having a Republican son. In 1939, his parents crossed the Pyrenees to France, leaving him behind, where they were held in a concentration camp. They manage to reach Mexico in the year 1940 and it was not until 1944 that the family could reunite with their child in the Mexican capital city.

His elementary education was full of outstanding results as seen in his report cards at the Spanish school of Mexico, the Luis Vives Institute. He entered UNAM in 1950 to study medicine and graduated with a thesis directed by the notable scientist Ruy Pérez Tamayo. Collaterally, he studied physics and mathematics in a self-taught way. While he was in his last year at the Faculty of Medicine, he was already studying physics at the Faculty of Science of his *alma mater*. At some point during that period, he conjectured that there should be common principles and laws for the study of physical, biological and social systems. This is the origin of the interdisciplinary nature of Germinal's scientific work. He concluded his second career and he went to Princeton to attend the university where he obtained his PhD in physics in 1962. After that, he made a two-year postdoctoral stay at the International Center for Theoretical Physics of Trieste. His work at that institution earned him to be named associate member.

On returning to UNAM, he began his academic work at the Institute of Physics displaying a remarkable activity. Around 1985, with the collaboration of other colleagues he developed a seminar on cosmology and quantum vacuum, which remained active for more than 15 years. The influence of this academic activity was enormous, since it defined the scientific life of many of those who participated there.

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Germinal was undoubtedly the founder of studies on complexity in Mexico. Moreover, he went ahead at least a decade to many universities in developed countries in promoting the study of this type of phenomena. He proposed the creation of a research program on the dynamics of complex systems, the seed of the current Department of Complex Systems and Statistical Physics of the Institute of Physics of the UNAM. Later, his interdisciplinary interests led him to contribute to the formation of interdisciplinary university groups at UNAM. Its support to CEIICH in the same university has been decisive to open new ways of thinking and to consolidate the communications of scholars coming from different fields.

His legacy has been transmitted successfully by his many students and followers who in Mexico and other parts of the world spread his work and intellectual heritage. The most notable feature of his work has been the absolute dedication to scientific research and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. This unconditional devotion to the cultivation of sciences has earned him numerous awards such as the Research Prize of the Mexican Academy of Sciences in 1969, the National Research University Award in 1991 and having received the Emeritus Researcher category of the UNAM in 2002.

Ricardo Mansilla Corona