THE CAJAL - GOLGI NOBEL PRESENTATIONS OF 1906, REVISITED IN 1985

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The fact that Ramón y Cajal and Golgi received the Nobel Prize in 1906 was, in itself, not especially surprising. By this time both had made enormously important contributions to the rapidly expanding field we now call neuroscience and Golgi had also made many important discoveries in histology and pathology. What was truly remarkable was that Santiago Ramón y Cajal and Camilo Golgi would share the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for diametrically opposed views on the structure of the nervous system.

In 1906 Ramón y Cajal was still at the height of his career. He had made numerous original discoveries and in just a few short years would see his scientific contributions recognized world wide with the publication of the French translation of his monumental "Histologie au Système Nerveux de L'Homme et des Vertébrés". Although this work had been published in Spanish (1899-1904) this version was not widely known outside of Spanish-speaking countries. Ramón y Cajal would publish other books, including a textbook of general histology. On the other hand Golgi, who had made the vast majority of his neurological observations in the late 1800's, had not conducted research on the structure of the nervous system for some years. Indeed, he seemed unaware of the newer discoveries or of the contemporary views of the time.

The Debate

At the 1985 meeting of the Cajal Club the Program Secretary (D. E. Haines) scheduled a reenactment of the 1906 Nobel presentations of Ramón y Cajal and Golgi. Dr. James L. Culberson (as S. Ramón y Cajal) and Dr. Dennis O. Overman (as C. Golgi) presented, in period dress and proper accent, abbreviated versions of the actual 1906 Nobel talks. Following a brief introduction by the Program Secretary, the remainder of this part of the afternoon session was conducted using the actual words of the 1906 event. The introduction of Golgi and

Figure 23. Camillo Golgi (left - by Dennis Overman) and Santiago Ramón y Cajal (right - by James Culberson) in a relaxed moment at West Virginia University in 1984.
Ramón y Cajal were made using the words of Count Mörner, President of the Nobel Committee. There followed, again in the actual words of the principals, shortened versions of the Nobel addresses.

The outstanding efforts of Culberson and Overman were well received by an appreciative audience. This event had been advertised ahead of time in the Anatomical Newsletter and drew a large crowd, conservatively estimated by several who attended the meeting, at 600-700. There was, quite literally, standing room only in a large hall. A partial view of the crowd is given in Figure 25 taken (from behind the speaker's table) on the occasion by Dr. Erikson. The following paper briefly reviews the lives of Ramón y Cajal and Golgi and offers interesting insights into the events surrounding the 1906 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. This is a slightly modified version of one that was given out at the Cajal Club meeting in 1985.

Two individuals who attended this reenactment of the Cajal-Golgi Nobel talks merit special comment. Dr. Wendell J. S. Krieg, the first Nucleolus of the Cajal Club, and Dr. E. Horne Craigie, a Cajal scholar of significant reputation, were present in the audience. In addition, it should be noted that Krieg and Craigie were both part of the Nucleus (the founding members) of the Cajal Club. Speaking with each afterward revealed that both had thoroughly enjoyed the presentations.

Figure 24. Cajal, Golgi and the Program Secretary of the Cajal Club at the 1985 meeting. From left to right; Santiago Ramón y Cajal (Jim Culberson), Duane E. Haines, and Camillo Golgi (Dennis Overman).
Figure 25. Camillo Golgi (left - D. Overman) and Santiago Ramón y Cajal (right - J. Culberson) after their presentations. Both are looking to their right to receive the greeting of an attendee to meeting.

Figure 26. A panoramic view of the meeting giving some idea of the size of the crowd.
CAJAL CONFERENCE ON NEUROBIOLOGY

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SANTIAGO RAMON Y CAJAL

MADRID 17-20 SEPTEMBER, 1984

Symposium Neural and Connective System
1. Functional Neurology
2. hodgkin and Huxley
3. maturana
4. kandel
5. koch
6. carr
7. loewenstein
8. johnson
9. zaman
10. stillman

Symposium Regeneration in the Nervous System
1. j. w. matthes
2. b. w. thompson
3. w. o. avery
4. m. w. avery
5. p. w. hamilton
6. s. abbot
7. c. d. denny
8. m. s. lewis

Symposium Synaptic Transmission
1. pollack
2. woolsey
3. m. pollack
4. r. m. eichenbaum
5. d. s. murphy
6. m. e. pollack
7. g. r. olsho

Symposium Genetic Engineering in Neurobiology
1. ferenci
2. d. pollack
3. d. s. murphy
4. m. s. lewis
5. m. s. lewis
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