

Oswaldo Goscinski (1938-2013)

Oswaldo Goscinski, retired professor of Quantum Chemistry at Uppsala University, died on October 30, 2013, the day after his 75:th birthday.

Oswaldo Goscinski grew up in Peron's Argentina and received a classical education at the prestigious Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, a special gymnasium organised in collaboration with Universidad de Buenos Aires, and which taught several generations of famous authors, artists, scientists and politicians.

With his first PhD in Chemistry from the University of Florida he arrived in Uppsala in 1966, where he continued his graduate studies to a Swedish Fil. Dr. in 1970. In 1982 he became Per-Olov Löwdin's successor on the chair in Quantum Chemistry at Uppsala University. In addition to prominent international positions like editorships, organiser of international meetings, collaborations and distinctions, e.g. the Prize of the International Academy of Quantum Molecular Science for 1980, he also served at important national duties as e.g. vice chairman of the Swedish National Science Research Council and presiding over its program committee for Physics.

Oswaldo Goscinski's main contribution to science was the development of sophisticated quantum chemical methods and their application to contemporary problems in theoretical chemistry. In particular, he was instrumental in extending fundamental theories of his teacher and mentor Per-Olov Löwdin to modern quantum chemistry. One of his objectives has been to increase accuracy and precision in analysing the properties of various quantum chemical systems via model independent investigations and analysis. His renowned recognition as an accomplished expert on propagator- and perturbation theory led him to achieve unique results in e.g. the determination of van der Waals forces, excitation and ionization energies, life times etc. His general passion for an erudite understanding of nature led him to find pathways to fundamental problems like symmetry violations in nature, limitation aspects of information theory and to voice the challenges of the density matrix N-representability conundrum.

With his double competence in chemistry and physics, including considerable interests in mathematics, philosophy and the humanities, Oswaldo Goscinski was particularly well suited to lead a cross-scientific institute like the department of quantum chemistry. As an avid and devoted spokesman for his field he "let thousand flowers bloom", as exemplified by the numerous multifaceted research projects that flourished under the parasol of quantum chemistry, from the chemistry of free radicals, surface science, dissipative systems, information theory, complex antimatter and quantum computers. He also fought successfully for an additional professorship in applied quantum chemistry at the department. He was a very inspiring teacher, he enjoyed lecturing, and he was heavily engaged in research education as established during his term as associate dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology.

For most of us, working with him as a teacher and scientist, the acquaintance and association with Oswaldo led to important consequences in more than one way. He represented the gateway to science. His playfulness and creativity inspired original questions and non-trivial scientific contributions. Finally, when we tried to stand on our own legs, it turned out that he

did not always buy our new ideas. Not until later did we understand that critique prompts carefulness and persistence, a necessity for the mental process to continue and never halt.

For us as young doctoral students, pursuing our studies in the late sixties and beginning of the seventies, it was a priceless privilege to share the brilliant creativity, flow of ideas, humour and inventiveness, which always emerged around Osvaldo at seminars, discussions, and coffee breaks. The happy, spirited and playful joker from Jorge Luis Borges Argentina did spoil us with adventurous anecdotes and puns, combined with refined and subtle argumentation – all from the renaissance reclaim of the classical antiquity to Edda-inspired Old-Norse mythology to Planck, Einstein, Bohr and Popper.

For us who worked closely with Osvaldo during many years since the sixties and seventies, it is impossible to express in a few words what he meant to us. He was always there with his understanding, his personal engagement, his knowledge, not only in delicate scientific interpretations but also in private and difficult problems of a more personal and confidential kind. His amazing courage, not to give in, despite an exceptionally long and severe illness has more than overwhelmed us. This courage combined with his wife Gunilla's strength to organise and arrange so that Osvaldo with the same sincerity as before, could participate in every gathering and invitation that concerned the department, science and the arts, but also in private parties and celebrations has manifested respect and admiration.

We will miss Osvaldo tremendously. Even when we are trying to understand and realize that life in the end must be completed, nothing can take away and destroy the joy of life and creativity that emerged from Rundelsgränd 2A and 2B, about 50 years ago. In this melting pot of contemporary scientific leaders in quantum chemistry, Osvaldo was a natural central point and visionary.

Behind Osvaldo's humorous and witty style existed an ardent feeling for freedom, justice and integrity. We all mourn today an honest, courageous and generous family man, friend, and colleague who always with empathy and resolution shared with us his engagement and unique wisdom of life.

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