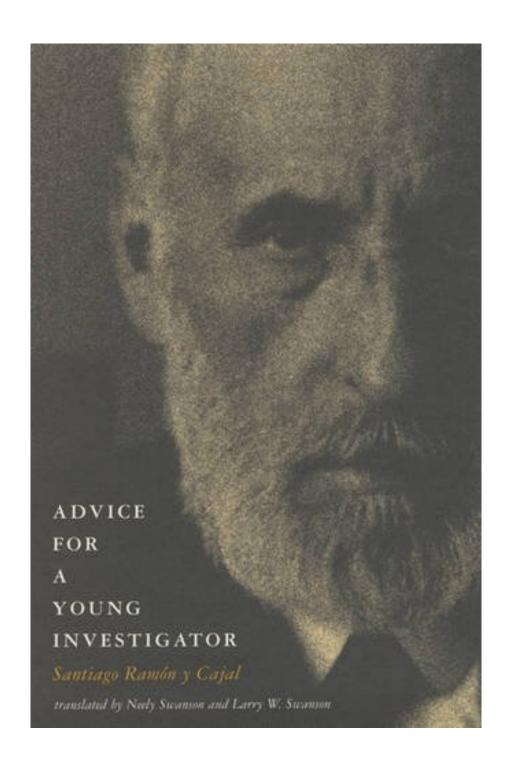


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About the Author

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Santiago Ramón y Cajal was a mythic figure in science. Hailed as the father of modern anatomy and neurobiology, he was largely responsible for the modern conception of the brain. His groundbreaking works were New Ideas on the Structure of the Nervous System and H istology of the Nervous System in Man and Vertebrates. In addition to leaving a legacy of unparalleled scientific research, Cajal sought to educate the novice scientist about how science was done and how he thought it should be done. This recently rediscovered classic, first published in 1897, is an anecdotal guide for the perplexed new investigator as well as a refreshing resource for the old pro.

Cajal was a pragmatist, aware of the pitfalls of being too idealistic -- and he had a sense of humor, particularly evident in his diagnoses of various stereotypes of eccentric scientists. The book covers everything from valuable personality traits for an investigator to social factors conducive to scientific work.

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27 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

"Los tonicos de la voluntad" or how to create a science

By Dr. Juan M. Pascual

Santiago Ramon y Cajal's achievement, the neuronal doctrine -undoubtedly the foundation of all relevant knowledge about the nervous systems, including the human brain-, was not the product of teamwork, technology or fashion. It was the achievement of his educated insight and uncomparable dedication. Scholars in the field of psychology teach us that advice can be interpreted as an attempt to justify the thoughts and actions of its originator. It seems inevitable that this work should reflect Cajal's disillusions with the institutionalization of mediocrity and with the arbitrariness of academic hierarchy. Surely, today, readers in numerous parts of the world will find these commonplace. Yet, Cajal's voice sounds as loud and clear as ever as a guiding light in the obscure path of human accomplishment. It will prevent any cultured reason from originating the kind of monsters that arise from its dreams. The book will -quoting Lucian- "...ornament your soul with what concerns you most: temperance, justice, piety, kindliness, reasonableness, understanding, steadfastness, love of all that is beautiful, ardour towards all that is sublime; for these are the truly flawless jewels of the soul... for though you yourself depart from life, you will never cease associating with men of education and conversing with men of eminence".

I have returned to these pages constantly since I was in medical school.

Recommended to lay people or scientists alike of an inquisitive nature who disregard authority, distrust officiality, wish to create, and consider themselves perpetual students of men and nature. A vey useful resource, too, when things go wrong in the lab.

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

not kind of advice that my advisor will give me

By A Reader

I am a graduate student (not in biology-ralated field) looking for general advice from this book. To my surprise much of Cajal's advice is still applicable not just today but in different disciplines. However, this is not a run-of-the-mill advice book for graduate students, and definitely not kind of advice my advisor will give me. Cajal is very passionate about doing science, and he doesn't hesitate to point out (sometimes very harshly) what he thinks the wrong ways of doing science.

It's expected that part of books are dated (remember it's first releasesd in 1897), but should not deter

interested readers from reading it. Sometimes Cajal made comments upon which any readers today will frown, like "A woman [...] is in different to all work related to change and progress". But don't call Cajal a sexist, and don't interpret his work in the value system of the 21st century. Cajal is so enthusiastic about science that few other things matter to him. Anyone can easily feel and understand his commitment to science after reading few pages of the book.

21 of 25 people found the following review helpful. A fantastic insight into the actual practice of neurobiology By Thomas Hughes

Too often our science is cleaned and polished to the point that it appears logical and quite easy. This remarkable monograph gives a much clearer view of the strenuous, adventurous, and often confusing nature of actually being a pioneer. It explores the social and political nature of scientific advance in a remarkably honest way, and each chapter rings true to the ears of a practicing neurobiologist today. It has quickly become favorite reading and the subject of discussion at our university, and is a must read for anyone interested in the actual craft of doing biology.

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