

Presentation of Professor Luis Carlos Arboleda

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It is for me an honour and a pleasure to introduce Professor Luis Carlos Arboleda who is going to pronounce the concluding plenary conference on this Congress, with the title : «The challenge of building a mathematical reason in the country of disanchantment». It is an honour and a pleasure, because Professor Luis Carlos Arboleda is not only a very active historian of science and a pioneer of history of science in Latin America, but he has also become, along the years of our professional and intellectual exchanges, a quite close friend.

After getting his degree in mathematics and physics at the Universidad del Valle in Cali (Colombia), he has studied logics and epistemology in Warsaw (Poland), one of the best and original places for these matters, and then he got his doctorate in history of mathematics at the Centre Alexandre Koyré of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, in Paris (France). Later on, he spent one year in Madrid (Spain), at the Centro de Estudios Históricos, working in social history of science. He has also been an invited professor in various institutions and universities in Bogotá, Montreal, Valencia, Paris (University Paris 7-Denis Diderot), Mexico (UNAM).

Professor Luis Carlos Arboleda is presently an Emerite titular professor of the Universidad del Valle in Cali, where he has been active in teaching and research during 30 years. I am always impressed how young many of my latin american colleagues get their retirement. But in the case of Luis Carlos Arboleda (as for other cases of my acquaintance), this does not mean the end of his intellectual and academic commitments, for he is continuing to develop actively history of science and science education in his country, and to orient young scholars in their master and doctoral formation, this being one of the fields where I have the pleasure to collaborate with him.

A correspondent member of Academia Colombiana de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales, he contributes in the animation of a number of international and national societies in education and history of science, particularly in mathematics, as well as of editorial boards of professional journals in these disciplines, such as *Quipu*, *Revue d'Histoire des mathématiques*, *Epistémologiques*... He is one of the founding members of the Sociedad Latino Americana de Historia de las Ciencias y la Tecnología, that has been so active in developing flourishing historical research since almost two decades, and of which he has been one of the presidents.

Among Luis Carlos Arboleda's scientific contributions, I shall mention his thesis on the topological work of the french mathematician Maurice Fréchet and the beginning of the Soviet topological school, his more recent contributions on abstract spaces in Fréchet, his studies on the polish school of mathematics and, last

but not least, his pioneer studies on mathematics, culture and society in Colombia, from the reception of Newton's *Principia* in the second part of the eighteenth century up to that of Bourbaki in the second part of the twentieth, and through the study of central figures of Colombian science such as José Celestino Mutis and Francisco José de Caldas, and of protagonists of the nineteenth century mathematical thought (on infinity, non euclidean geometries, etc.) such as Indalecio Liévano and Julio Garavito.

Professor Luis Carlos Arboleda has been designated at this Congress to be the Secretary general of the IASCUD Commission (on Science and Cultural Diversity) of the International Union of Philosophy and History of Science, Section History of Science.

I would like to add a personal comment to this presentation : I happened to realize in these last years, through my working sojourns in Colombia and my connexions with Colombian scholars, how difficult it is to keep working in research and for research in a country where the social and political conditions have suffered such a deep degradation as they have done in this magnificent country that Colombia is, with an exceptional human wealth. And we know that in other countries also, with similar or different contexts, it is very difficult to keep going on to develop pure knowledge. I want to say my deep admiration of those abnegated and courageous scholars, and express my indefectible solidarity with them who, like my friend Luis Carlos Arboleda, keep fully dedicating themselves to what they think is their duty in such unfavourable and sometimes tragic conditions.

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