

Editorial

“En más ocasiones de las que quisiéramos, la psicología ha sido una disciplina vergonzante, culposamente superficial respecto a la filosofía, miope respecto a la sociología, si comparada con la fisiología, alquimista en relación con la física y estéril al lado de la literatura.” Jorge Larreamendy-Joerns (1964-2012).

In October 16, 2012, Jorge Larreamendy-Joerns, associate professor of psychology at Universidad de los Andes, died after a brief illness. Jorge was a great friend, and a mentor for many of us. During his years at Universidad del Valle, Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Universidad de los Andes, he inspired many to pursue careers in the academic world, and to look for beauty beyond the technicalities of research. His legacy, however, transcends the realm of the interpersonal, and spreads across psychological domains; it redefines the foundations of psychology in Latin America, the meaning of being a researcher in a developing country in a time of global paths.

The first time I heard Jorge talk about the future of psychology was in 2001 when he gave a talk in a conference in which we were participating as student volunteers. He talked then, and afterwards, of the diversity of psychology and of its limitless possibilities as a social science. Jorge respected psychoanalytic theory and understood in depth Lacan's work. He also had an encyclopedic knowledge of the underpinnings of European philosophy and the literary classics. He knew that, and knew it well. However, as a researcher trained in the North-American tradition, he knew also how to deal with complex data using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. He believed that science, using the words of Simon, should be discovery, not verification; that it should transcend control of variables, and go beyond predictable experiments. He thought that we, as psychologists, should always aim for high-impact questions grounded in the quests of classical philosophy, and inspired by disciplinary history and original sources. He defended the political within the psychological as an option, but not as an obligation.

He always dismissed disciplinary quarrels between schools of thought, while respecting intellectual debate and disagreement. He thought that the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods was a false one, and defended a broad methodological behaviorism, in which several sources of evidence (from ethnography to experiments) were welcome. He did believe that abandoning empirical research for pure hermeneutic interpretation, limited psychology to

produce theory without a conversation with reality. He thought, however, that psychology could not be reduced to what is observable. In this line, he defended and practiced a methodological eclecticism, in which narrative, identity, representation and behavior were different lenses to reach human nature, different ways to see our contested experience as social beings and individuals.

He thought that psychological research should be, at least, provocative, and that good research should take informed risks, or it would become predictable, boring. He always stressed four disciplinary challenges, challenges that did not aim to capture all the experience or monopolize the theoretical space, but to broaden the horizons of a still young science. He proposed that psychology needed to transcend statistical explanation and capture the underlying mechanisms in an ample spectrum of levels, from the computational to the socio-historical. He believed in interdisciplinary work and in the need to study everyday experience accepting its complexity and embracing the loss of experimental control that comes with it. He also defended narrative as a way to convey what is not conveyable in the realm of subjective experience. More important, he believed in building a discipline informed of context and cultural meanings, a Latin American psychology, for the lack of a better word, but he believed also in the enriching value of methods and findings developed in the United States and Europe. He was someone, using Tolstoy's words, who wanted to write about his own village, our village, aiming at finding answers to universal questions. He used local examples to talk about global issues. Jorge was a great man and a great friend, and he was a psychologist, as few of us are, when measured by the scope of his knowledge of all the corners of the discipline. These lessons are part of his legacy. A legacy we want to keep alive at RCP, as a way to honor Jorge's memory and example.