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Acta Colombiana de Psicología

Ernesto L. Ravelo-Contreras*

Dear readers of *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*,

From our journal -which was one of the great initiatives of our deceased director- we render a posthumous tribute to Dr. Carlos Vargas Ordóñez, who passed away on May 24rd. As dean of the Faculty of Psychology of the Catholic University of Colombia, Dr. Vargas founded the Journal *Acta Colombiana de Psicología* and for 20 years was the leader of this publication that today is recognized as one of the greatest impact in the field of Psychology and to which he always provided his wise guidance, as well as his strong and permanent support.

More than 20 years ago, Dr. Vargas had a dream for our beloved institution, the Catholic University of Colombia, and, in particular, for the Faculty of Psychology: that both should be known internationally as houses of wisdom, but of the wisdom that transcends the simple knowledge, of the wisdom that is life and path, of the wisdom that liberates and is revealed in the free decisions of the person.

Certainly, the beginning of such a utopia was not easy, but the power of teamwork and the exceptional leadership exercised by Dr. Vargas at the head of the Faculty made it possible to accomplish great goals and realizations whereby, above all, today we can bear witness of a fortunate evidence: the strength of faith in a cause for which we knew from the beginning that it was worth fighting.

Throughout his life, Dr. Vargas stood out for his vision of service to the community, for his great altruistic spirit, and for devoting all his effort to achieve the goals that he set for himself, among many other valuable characteristics of his personality. He was born on June 17, 1938, in the town of Bolívar (Cauca), to a hardworking Christian family. In his youth, his father, a lawyer by profession, moved with his family to the city of Popayán, where he excelled in the field of Law, coming to occupy positions of great responsibility and figuration. In those times, the young Carlos Vargas, always with his vocation of service to others, carried out Philosophy studies at the *Seminario Conciliar de Popayán*

[Conciliar Seminary of Popayán], to subsequently obtain the degree of Bachelor of Theology from the *Pontificia Universidad Javeriana* [Pontifical Javeriana University] in Bogotá, followed by his Psychology studies at the Catholic University of Colombia, which consolidated his already important academic career, and oriented his professional life to devote himself entirely to the service of education and psychology in Colombia.

After joining the public education sector as a director and teacher at the service of the Ministry of Education, in 1980 he was appointed rector of the *Colegio Nacional Nicolás Esguerra* [Nicolás Esquerra National School], where his mission was to start and consolidate the afternoon session. He remained there for twenty years and led the institution to obtain the highest recognition as a state educational institution. At the same time, and demonstrating his exceptional work capacity, he worked for the *Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano* [Jorge Tadeo Lozano University], in Bogotá, in the positions of Coordinator of University Integration and Postgraduate Coordinator. And from there, in the year 1989, went on to lead the destiny of the Faculty of Psychology at the Catholic University of Colombia for more than 27 consecutive years.

Along the same lines, Dr. Vargas belonged to several professional associations, in which he stood out for his active participation and important achievements. Initially, he was co-founder of the *Colegio Colombiano de Psicólogos -COLPSIC* [Colombian School of Psychologists -COLPSIC-, for its Spanish acronym] where he served as a member in its first Board of Directors, and then, from that same position, participated in the formulation of the bill of Law 1090 of 2006, whereby the professional practice of psychology in Colombia was regulated, and between 2007 and 2011, was elected President of the Regional Chapter of Bogotá and Cundinamarca of this professional association. Later, as a member, during two periods, of the board of directors of the *Asociación Colombiana de Facultades de Psicología -ASCOFAPSI* [Colombian Association of Psychology

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The biographical data included were elaborated - at the time - by Dr. Carlos Vargas Ordóñez (may he rest in peace) and Dr. Héctor Balmes Ocampo Villegas -Director of the undergraduate program of the Faculty of Psychology.

Faculties -ASCOFAPSI-, for its Spanish acronym] he promoted the scientific development of this field of knowledge for the general benefit of society. He was also co-founder and first president of the *Asociación Colombiana de Psicología -ACOLPSIC-* [Colombian Association of Psychology -ACOLPSIC-, for its Spanish acronym].

Finally, as dean of the Faculty of Psychology of the Catholic University of Colombia, he led the creation and development of four Specializations - in the areas of clinical, educational, legal and organizational psychology-, a Research Master Program in Psychology and a Doctorate in Psychology, while positioning the Faculty at the forefront of the country's programs, achieving high-quality accreditation for the undergraduate course in 2005 and its renewal for eight years in 2013.

It is worth mentioning that, on two occasions, he received the public recognition and certificate from the Rector's Office of the University for his "proven commitment to academic excellence", which allowed his students to obtain higher scores on state tests. Similarly, in 2013, by nomination from the Department of Humanities of the University and

the Advisory Board of the Faculty of Psychology, he was granted the institutional recognition "*Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum*", awarded each year to the "professional who develops or has developed outstanding academic work in his respective discipline, art or science, in the humanities or politics". And in 2015, the Rector of the Catholic University of Colombia granted him a special recognition for his 25 years of uninterrupted services, at the same time that the *Colegio Colombiano de Psicólogos* nominated him to the national awards "To a life of devotion to Psychology" and "Guild management and its beneficial social impact", obtaining this latter recognition in November of that same year.

From *Acta Colombiana de Psicología* we express our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Vargas' family, his friends and colleagues. At the same time, we would want to say that his departure, although painful, is an incentive to continue working for the benefit of the Faculty and the University. For this reason, we invite the entire community to remain strong and continue to be faithful disciples of his teachings and his great legacy.