

Homage to Raul Oliveri

To the Editor

“Dr. Raúl Oliveri” Public Library opened in Hospital Presidente Perón of Avellaneda on the 21st of August. The result of more than one thousand volumes donated by his relatives, the ceremony held at the hospital’s Auditorium portrayed the picture of he who engraved his life through pioneering activities in the medical field. Beyond his profession, his personality was defined in the existentialism that led him to the constant enquiry of the self as a being and also to explore man’s role in society. No wonder the donated texts, which join the existing library, fundamentally address political, philosophical and literary issues. His daughter, writer Martha Oliveri, moved the audience with *“Letter to My Father”* where she expressed: *“This library was his most precious treasure and will therefore be an immense joy to share his thoughts through his books and his writings.”* The ceremony closed with a speech by writer Carlos Penelas.

Raúl was my friend and teacher. I shared with him countless chats on man, his social movements and his responsibility in affection as unavoidable future. By fortuitous circumstances, we sometimes call instinctive, I was able to record those extensive discussions where I was in constant demand to extract from his wisdom the existence of the living being. Whole evenings at his home in Santa Fe Avenue and then in Congreso Avenue, where the mundane vortex of hurried men, enslaved by time and eternity, collided with his unrenounceable word on the value of human freedom, beyond his tormenting and despairing, inexorable fate. Then he would say raising his hands to entwine them with the vital force that emerged from his thoughts: *“When the state itself becomes an entity it misrepresents the situation of democracy. The individual must become the fundamental objective of any system”*. And also: *“The human being is a blend of all that is physical with all his biographies, his anxieties, especially in the critical situations in which he goes to a doctor, where he thinks he may suffer, he may die.”*

On one occasion I asked, *“Why did you become a doctor, Raúl?”* His voice became pleasant with reminiscence: *“I was a pretty sick child. Then I became an avid reader. I’ll never forget three books that at twelve marked me to be a doctor. Bodies and Souls by Van der Meersch, The Microbe Hunters by Paul de Kruif and The Citadel by Cronin. They linked medicine to ethics. At that point I decided my life.”*

He was not merely an existentialist. In private all his actions were of a profound romanticism. That is why, had he lived to eternity, he would have never stopped sculpting his own statue. *“At 75 years it is not easy having pending subjects, but still I say, one of the things I would have liked the most is to be a writer. I had written a lot of things, many theater projects, poems. In 1963 when they raided my house they stole everything, they stole all the literature from my teenage and youth, they took everything and I could never get it back; it was a lot of notebooks, notes, things. Everything was over. They ripped off the literary facet of my adolescence. So, I say, I would have loved to be a writer but it is very difficult as the Hungarians say to ride two horses at the same time”*. Maybe that is why one day he confessed that he wanted to believe

there was something after life: *“I always say that the deepest anguish man can have is the fear of death, isn’t that so? Although he knows from birth that he is going to die, he denies it, always thinking of the death of others and never of his own.”*

Death is always tragic. It encloses what man does not assimilate with his vices of eternity and slavery. Raul Oliveri’s ideology spoke of those things that seem to be found in emptiness, far from the days of *“hurried”* men.

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