



IN MEMORIAM

EDUARDO CÉSARMAN VITIS
1931-2004

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EDUARDO CESARMAN VITIS

The death of doctor Eduardo Césarman Vitis caused me great sorrow and grieve. Eduardo Césarman was an original thinker, a great writer and a cardiologist. He was also a faithful friend and a staunch supporter of *Ludus Vitalis* since its inception. Eduardo Césarman came from a very distinguished family. His father, Carlos Césarman, a man of great ecumenical culture, was the owner of a large bookshop and a printing business. The name of the printing company was *Pax*, the Latin name for peace, and it continues to be active. His bookshop was located on top of the ruins of the Aztec's *Templo Mayor*, in the heart of the historical center of Mexico City. Doctor Césarman's father was an intellectual with a great faith in the written word who frequently quoted the Latin sentence *Lettera scripta manent verba volent*. All these facts may have contributed to Eduardo's choice of becoming a writer. As a child and adolescent he was a voracious reader; he seemed to have read his father's entire bookshop. When I used to ask him about rare books, only on occasions did he acknowledge ignorance in the matter. He had two elder brothers: Teodoro, who became an important cardiologist with a large private practice, but was really a poet at heart, and Fernando, who is a world-renowned psychoanalyst. Fernando is also a fiction writer, an essayist and an articulate environmentalist. Eduardo was very attached to Teodoro and he said that the mould was broken when his brother was born, there could be no other Teodoro.

Eduardo received a very complete education in the sciences and humanities, having attended several private schools in Mexico City. He particularly liked the study of physics and mathematics. As a child and adolescent he showed signs of a great intelligence and prodigious memory, as well as an acute sense of humor. He was always cheerful, laughed a lot and was highly tolerant to all kinds of opinions. He enrolled in the Medical School at the National University of Mexico and upon graduating first in his class, he went to the United States to continue his medical studies. Later he went to the University of Maryland Hospital in Baltimore where he did his internship, and then studied pathological anatomy for two years in New York. Finally, he decided that he wanted to become a cardiologist. This choice as his specialty may have been influenced by the

fact that his brother Teodoro was already a cardiologist with rising fame. He returned to Mexico City and entered the Instituto Nacional de Cardiología, leading him to a distinguished career as a physician and as a humanist. He became close to Ignacio Chávez, who was then the director of the Instituto and a world-renowned cardiologist; he met there several distinguished people, among them Norbert Wiener, with whom recalled playing chess several times, when the great mathematician visited the Instituto invited by Arturo Rosenblueth. The mathematician was fond of the Instituto de Cardiología, being one of the most advanced in the world, and was also fond of Mexico. Arturo Rosenblueth had worked with Walter Bradford Cannon at Harvard University where, working with blood vessels, discovered the hypersensitivity of denervated structures; discovery that gave Rosenblueth everlasting fame.

Eduardo knew and met most of the distinguished cardiologists of Mexico and the world, and was widely recognized as an astute clinician and a scientist interested in physiological mechanisms; he had the Faustic urge to know more of the disease than just its clinical manifestations. His intelligence was recognized early on in his career and was invited to work at the National University of Mexico in the Departamento de Servicios Escolares. There he instituted a three-year High School, created an examination to enter the National University and greatly improved the quality of university education. During this time he kept working as a thinker and shortly after he left his career at the National University he published an impressive book: *Hombre y entropía* (*Man and Entropy*). The late Gastón García Cantú, who was a close friend, prologued the book. He rightly recognized the scope of the book in terms of its depth and wisdom, and he greeted it as a scientific *Summa* comparable to Thomas Aquinas'. Later he was to publish another book, equally as impressive, *Orden y caos* (*Order and Chaos*). In these two books Eduardo discussed the nature of the second law of thermodynamics and its consequences in the physical, biological and social sciences, as well as in the daily commerce of human beings. He continued to work on this subject throughout the rest of his life. In these books he thoroughly discussed the problems of order, disorder, entropy, chaos, complexity and the concept of free energy. This was long before the concept of complexity and the application of the second law of thermodynamics to living systems would become a topic worth of interest throughout the world. He is truly a precursor and a developer of many modern ideas in biology. He worked with doctor Norman Brachfeld of New York and from this association several books and articles were published in international journals, among them "A theory of the heart beat" and "The resting state of the heart and a theory of diastole and systole," where it is explored the possibility that the diastole is a process whereby the heart "rests" in order to acquire free energy and information, whereas during

the systole the heart uses its accumulated free energy and dissipates heat. Ludwig Boltzmann and Erwin Schrödinger were his scientific heroes, and he became a great admirer of Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and Ilya Prigogine. He thought biological and social systems as open systems that must constantly acquire information in order to become ordered. Social systems become disordered if no free energy and information is fed into them; biological systems perished if no matter and energy and information (i.e., food) entered into their systems.

I met Césarman many years ago at the Centro Médico Nacional and became fascinated by his personality and his ideas. I told him about reading *Hombre y entropía* and he laughed. I also told him that I was interested in the relationship between the heart and the brain. Generously, he took me to the Instituto Nacional de Cardiología and introduced me to several people including Ignacio Chávez and Rafael Méndez. At that time he was the chief of clinical epidemiology in that institution. Thereafter we traveled to the First Congress on the Brain and Heart Relationship, held in Jerusalem, 1981, and presented a joint paper. We also published two papers on cardiac arrhythmias as seen in acute neurological diseases.

He gradually became more interested in writing fiction and poetry. His style was precise and succinct with short sentences where no word was wasted. He produced two masterpieces: *Fuera de contexto* (*Out of Context*) and *Cuarto menguante* (*The Moon in its Final Quarter*). *Fuera de contexto* is written in an epigrammatic style. It has the urbane and the intelligent quality of Ecclesiastes in the Bible; full of sentences that are witty and accurate. Is not a cynical book and has an unequivocal disenchanted taint; young people who read the book become fascinated. *Cuarto menguante* is difficult to classify. It may be an intellectual autobiography or a novel; is undoubtedly a masterpiece of fiction. The appalling sincerity and polished style are reminiscent of Pascal and Jean Rostand. A short time before his death he published a small book: *Ser médico* (*Being a Physician*), where the same sincerity is flaunted before our eyes; in fact, several sentences offended the souls of those more prudish clinicians. His great essays have not been translated into other languages and it is to be hoped that in the future some translations will appear, so his theories and narrative prose may become widely known.

Eduardo Césarman contributed several essays to *Ludus Vitalis*, including some with me, one with Norman Brachfeld and others independently. He wrote three book-length essays with me, including *El telar encantado: El enigma de la relación mente-cerebro* (*The Enchanted Loom: The Enigma of the Mind-Brain Relationship*), *El laberinto y la ilusión* (*The Labyrinth and the Illusion*) and *Como perro bailarín* (*Like a Dancing Dog*). In these books we analyzed the different theories that account for the relationship between the brain and the mind, and then we turned to the relationship brain and

culture. We emphasized the function of the brain as an open system that requires energy and information in order to ensure reduced levels of entropy, and we proposed a model of the brain as an entropy combatant system (in the same fashion as other living systems).

Eduardo and his wife Mocita Kolteniuk had four children, and they were a wonderful family. For my own part and on behalf of *Ludus Vitalis* we extend our deepest condolences to them.

Many times a day I ponder the scores of questions that I would like to discuss with the lucid mind of Eduardo Césarman. His wisdom, like that of many great people who went before him, is preserved in his books where it is alive and ripe for discussion.

Bruno Estañol M.D.
Mexico City, January 2005.

Portrait: Acapulco, México, 1993, at the colloquium "*The game of life, life as a game*," that gave birth to *Ludus Vitalis*.