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# Notes for a History of Philosophy in the Philippines

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LEO A. CULLUM

**N**O history of philosophy in the Philippines has yet been written. General histories of philosophy do, of course, contain much that is pertinent, but there does not exist, as far as this writer knows, any work which professedly traces the record of philosophical thought in this country, lists the names of its philosophers and endeavors to describe the genesis and character of their thinking. Yet such a history would be very helpful for a study of Philippine culture and for an understanding of Filipino leaders. For it cannot be that the systems of thought which rule the minds of men in any society would not leave their stamp upon the lives and conduct of that society and those men.

Much light would be thrown on the problem by a consideration of the history of philosophy in Spain and Latin America. Latin America parallels the Philippines in so many things that it is altogether likely that the experience of the Spanish colonies on the other side of the Pacific would contain valuable suggestions for the study of the same phase of Philippine history. As for Spain, obviously the mother country for over three centuries was the mother, too, of much that was born in the realm of ideas; and therefore a study of Spain and its philosophical experiences must inevitably suggest avenues of exploration with regard to the Philippines.

## PHILOSOPHY IN LATIN AMERICA

Though the complete history of philosophy in Latin America remains to be written, there do exist numerous studies which can serve to give a general picture of the subject. The last twenty years have seen a remarkable activity about this topic, manifesting itself in published writings, in the founding of philosophical reviews, and in the organization of cooperative effort through societies and conventions. Much of the work has been precisely concerned with the history of philosophy in the Latin American countries.<sup>1</sup> The general story is something as follows.

The 16th and 17th centuries in Latin America were a faithful reflection of the philosophical situation that obtained in Spain at the same time. The great scholastic revival made itself felt across the Atlantic especially under the patronage of the religious orders. Universities were founded at Lima (1551), Mexico (1553), and Bogotá (1627), modelled upon Spain's own great Salamanca. In these universities and in other educational institutions established during the period, professors taught and wrote who were the equals of the scholars of the mother country. The Augustinian Fray Alonso de Vera Cruz (c. 1551), for example, who taught in the University of Mexico, and the Dominican Fray Bartolomé de Ledesma (d. 1604), who held chairs in the University of Mexico and Lima, were theologians of high quality. Father Antonio Rubio (1548-1615), a Jesuit, wrote several well received philosophical works, among them the *Commentarium in Logicam* (Cologne, 1605), known as the *Lógica Mexicana*, adopted as a text in Alcalá.

The 18th century saw the introduction of what is often called "modern" philosophy. With the decline of scholasticism Cartesian ideas began to appear, first in Spain and then in Latin America. The University of Havana, founded in 1728, used as a text the *Institutiones Philosophicae* of the Franciscan

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<sup>1</sup> Patricio Peñalver, "La filosofía en Hispanoamérica; antecedentes y situación actual," *Arbor*, XVII (1950), 65-84. What follows is largely from this article.

Francois Jacquier, who belonged to a group of Catholic philosophers who depended more on Descartes and Condillac than on Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> At the same time that Cartesianism was spreading, two other currents were making themselves felt, the empiricism of Locke and Condillac, and in political and social philosophy, the writings of the French Encyclopedists.

With the advent of independence in the early eighteen hundreds, the reign of encyclopedism and empiricism was confirmed. However, there soon came a reaction against these schools in the direction of the various spiritualistic systems which were appearing in France at the same time and for the same reason. Thus Maine de Biran, Cousin and the Scottish school of Royer-Collard won adherents.

In the early 19th century Bentham's utilitarianism exerted a powerful influence and he himself reports that by 1830 forty thousand copies of Dumont's *Traité de législation de M. Jérémie Bentham*, a summary of Bentham's tenets, had been sold in Paris for the South American trade.<sup>3</sup> Finally after the middle of the century Comte's positivism won a wide acceptance. Nearly all the positivists were "liberals" in the peculiar sense of the term then current, namely, unbelievers, anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic.

Once again there was a reaction against this uninspiring and unconvincing philosophy, a reaction which took various forms but was at one in being anti-positivistic. Among European philosophers who found favor in this counter movement were Wundt, and later Bergson and Bourtoutx.

With the publication of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII, August 4, 1879, there was some reawakening of interest in scholastic philosophy. The effects of that reawakening were not however felt until the present century. The history of philosophy in Latin America in the present century, in view of the sharp change in fortunes of the two countries,

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Geny, S.J., *Brevis conspectus historiae philosophiae* (Rome: 1943), p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Stephens, *The English Utilitarians* (New York: 1900), I, 221.

is not likely to be suggestive for the Philippines. We shall therefore not pursue this summary further.

#### PHILOSOPHY IN SPAIN

If the history of philosophy in Latin America is capable of throwing light on the history of philosophy in the Philippines, this will be true in even a greater degree of philosophy in the mother country, Spain. The discovery of the Philippines in 1521 occurred just as Spain was on the threshold of the scholastic revival. For the next century philosophy would be illumined by men like Vitoria (1480-1566), Soto (1494-1560), Cano (1509-1581), Báñez (1528-1604), Toledo (1532-1596), Molina (1536-1600), Vásquez (1551-1604) and Suárez (1548-1617).

Though on the whole the scholastic decline was less grave in Spain than elsewhere, nevertheless during the 17th century, and especially during the 18th, scholastic teaching ceased to command such universal approval as in the previous century and the scholarship both of those who defended and of those who assailed it left much to be desired.

That philosophical activity was not diminished in quantity is evidenced by the large number of books published and the numerous manuscripts existing in the Academy of History of Madrid, containing the work of professors of philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Though the majority of the philosophers of these two centuries continued to profess allegiance to scholastic teachings, there were some who remained outside this line of thought, mostly under inspiration from abroad. Even as early as 1554 Gómez Pereira took issue with the scholastics on matter and form, and anticipated Descartes in denying sensation to animals. Cardoso, a Jewish physician of the 17th century, was an atomist. Jaime Servera, who wrote in 1693, Luís Rodríguez who wrote in 1666 and Tomás Vicente Tosca who wrote in 1721

<sup>4</sup> Ramón Ceñal, S.J., "Manuscritos de filósofos jesuitas conservados en la Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid)," *Pensamiento*, 15 (1959), 61-82.

were all atomists, strongly influenced by the French Cartesian, Maignan (1601-1676).

Meanwhile the scholastics, vis-à-vis the new ideas, for the most part simply rejected them. They were moved to this in some measure by the irreligious antecedents of the new doctrines and their theological implications. A long list of scholastics could be quoted who simply refused to entertain any thought of possible adaptation or reconciliation with the new opinions. Their rebuttals were, however, at times lacking in scholarly objectivity. There were others, however, who in one degree or another showed themselves impressed by the new ideas. Some few accepted the corpuscular theory in place of hylomorphism. Ezterripa says that a fellow Jesuit, Cruzat, agreed with Tosca, mentioned above, the leading atomist of the time. And Luís Rodríguez claimed even wider Jesuit support.<sup>5</sup>

As philosophy moved into the 18th century eclecticism became more and more the mood of the time. Ignacio Monteiro, S.J. (1724-1812), treated philosophy so liberally and eclecticly that he could hardly be called a scholastic.<sup>6</sup> In the second half of the 18th century the philosophy which was generally taught in the Catholic universities and colleges could hardly be called scholastic, and depended more on Descartes and Condillac than on Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> Though this was less the case in the Spanish schools than elsewhere, Monteiro is witness that the tendency was not absent from Spain. The very vigor and heat of the defense of scholasticism is in itself an indication that it was under fire and that there was widespread dissatisfaction and criticism. This was above all true with regard to the ideas on the constitution of matter.

Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912), who treated the subject in his *Historia de los Heterodoxos Españoles*, expressed a very low estimate of Spanish philosophy in the 19th century. Though not all agree fully with his strictures there is no doubt

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<sup>5</sup> Ceñal, *art. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>6</sup> Geny, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

that the situation was bad. Ceñal says of scholasticism then: "Spanish scholasticism at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century was in a state of lamentable decay."<sup>8</sup> There is no reason to think that this condition was suddenly arrived at. Rather it was the normal term of the long downward trend begun in the 17th century and continued through the 18th, summarily described in the preceding paragraphs.

Of all the Spanish philosophers of the first part of the century only Balmes and Donoso Cortés were distinguished. As for the rest, the general picture was of a mediocre and less than mediocre scholasticism languishing in a welter of foreign importations. There were followers of Hegel, of Reid, of French spiritualism, of positivism. Most significant was a derivative of Kant called Krausism which won a very wide following, and which, while it soon lost its adherents, at least conferred the benefit of stirring up an interest in philosophy and of sparking a kind of revival.

There were a few scholastics who rose above the general low level like José Fernández Cuevas, S.J.<sup>9</sup> (1816-1864), and Joaquín de Jesús Alvarez, O.S.A. (1835-1876). Towering above all was the Dominican, Ceferino González, later Cardinal. He is praised even by his adversaries for his breadth and depth. He worked at Madrid for the restoration of Thomism, and is rightly considered one of the founders of neo-scholasticism. Beginning about his time (González published his *Philosophia Elementaria* in 1868) scholastic philosophy began to enjoy a healthier life and the works of Mendive (1836-1906) and of Urráburu (1844-1904) at once testified and contributed to the progress.

However, things were still far from the vigor of today.

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<sup>8</sup> Ramón Ceñal, S.J., "La filosofía española en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," *Revista de Filosofía*, 15 (1956), 403-444. Much of what follows is from this article.

<sup>9</sup> Father Fernández Cuevas led the Jesuits who in 1859 first returned to the Philippines after their expulsion eighty years before. However he seems in no way to have contributed to philosophical scholarship here. He died in 1864, before the Jesuits had opened their college course.

The best known of the neo-scholastics in Spain was Juan Manuel Ortí y Lara (1826-1904). Of Ortí y Lara, professor of philosophy in the University of Madrid and author of several philosophical works, Ceñal says: "It is sad to think that Christian philosophy was represented for long years at our first university by such teaching and such books."<sup>10</sup>

The general history therefore is this. After the revival of scholasticism in the 16th and 17th centuries, a decline set in. From this point on three currents may be discerned. The first remained faithful to the scholastic system. A second, itself not one stream but many, from France, England, Germany and even Italy, expressed various reactions of the moderns against decadent scholasticism, as well against one or another: rationalism, empiricism, spiritualism, positivism and eclecticism. The third stream was of those who endeavored to effect a reconciliation of the "modern" schools with scholasticism. This babel of systems continued to account for whatever philosophical activity there was in Spain until about the last quarter of the 19th century when partly under the stimulus of *Aeterni Patris* scholasticism showed signs of a new life. But the old errors remained in spite of this renaissance.

In view of the close parallel that exists between Philippine history and Latin-American history, and in view further of the dominant influence exercised upon the Philippines by Spain, the question naturally arises whether the story of philosophy before 1900 in Latin America and Spain (they are very similar) is also the history of philosophy in the Philippines. We can probably conclude a priori that there will be a resemblance but it would be satisfying to establish such a resemblance by documents and texts.

There would be one important difference between Latin-America and the Philippines. After the Latin-American countries gained their independence between 1810 and 1826, they no longer retained their close ties with Spain, but rather looked to France for their intellectual leadership. In the Philippines, however, during the same period, since Spanish rule continued,

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<sup>10</sup> La Filosofía, p. 441.

the Spanish influence remained dominant, and the influence of other countries was less pronounced, though not absent.

#### PHILOSOPHY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Peñalver says: "The history of philosophy in America is still to be written." The same is true and in a more marked degree of the history of philosophy in the Philippines.

There was philosophical education from the earliest days of the Spanish rule. Philosophy was taught in some form in *conventos* (to young religious), in seminaries and in colleges. Omitting the *convento* schools, which were occasional, we may say that there would have been throughout the three and a half centuries of Spanish control, at any given time, about seven or eight institutions where philosophy was seriously taught. These would have been the University of Santo Tomás, the Jesuit College of Manila (or later the Ateneo de Manila), the Colegio de San José, one or two colleges like San Ildefonso in Cebu, and two or three seminaries, for example at Naga and Vigan. Though no one of these existed for the whole period, some, like Santo Tomás and San José, were operating for a great part of it.<sup>11</sup>

Philosophy was in the first centuries taught according to the traditional division of Logic, Physics and Metaphysics. Under these general headings were included most of the modern philosophical curriculum, though not always with the same names. In the last half of the 19th century, when the so-called Cuban plan was applied to the Philippines, history of philosophy and empirical psychology began to appear in the curriculum.

Santo Tomás had an impressive philosophical program. At least three years in philosophy were required for matriculation in the other disciplines: Civil Law, Canon Law and Theology. The tests to which a candidate had to submit to obtain a degree of Bachelor, Licentiate or Doctor were exacting. The degree of Doctor especially was treated as a very high honor

<sup>11</sup> For the data on philosophical studies confer Evergisto Bazaco, O.P., *History of Education in the Philippines* (Manila, 1939), *passim*.

and its conferring took on the nature of a civil holiday. From 1634 till 1800, baccalaureates in philosophy numbered 817, licentiates 79 and doctorates 61. The enrollment of the University in philosophy was 3981 from 1861 to 1870, 3291 from 1871 to 1880, and 1714 from 1881 to 1898. On an average about half of those who enrolled passed.

We may presume that the Ratio Studiorum prescribed in 1599 for Jesuit colleges was in force in the College of Manila for its own students and for those of the Colegio de San José who attended lectures there.<sup>12</sup> This philosophical curriculum took three years. Formal disputations were held every month. At least once a year a public disputation or "act" in philosophy was held. In these disputations any of the guests could propose difficulties to the defendant after the appointed objectors were finished. It is a mark of the interest generally taken in philosophy that on one occasion, in 1609, two military officers objected. An exceptionally capable student might be permitted to hold a "grand act" in which he undertook to defend against all comers a list of theses covering a wide field of philosophy. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the College of Manila disappeared and the Colegio de San José ceased to have significance as an institution of learning. It was not until the establishment of the Ateneo de Manila as a college in 1865 that the Society of Jesus began again to play a role in philosophy in the Philippines.

These facts indicate that there was interest and activity in philosophical studies in the Philippines. It is true that they are only a few isolated data scattered over three centuries, and generalizations from them must be made with great caution. Nevertheless we may presume that the few points mentioned were typical. No doubt many more could be produced to show that this attention to philosophy was a factor in education all through the Spanish regime.

We may also take it for granted, as we have said, that in general the history of philosophy in the Philippines went

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<sup>12</sup> H. de la Costa, S.J., "Jesuit Education in the Philippines to 1768," *Philippine Studies*, 4 (1956), 144-47.

through the several stages which we have observed in the histories of Latin-America and Spain, namely, after a century and a half of undisputed and on the whole scholarly work, scholasticism suffered a decline, and various non-scholastic systems won recognition and a measure of acceptance. The third period was that of the late 19th century when scholasticism began to awaken and to experience a healthy revival, without however being able to displace the other schools which during the period of its decline had taken root. It would be the task of the historian to check these presumptions against the facts.

The scholar who wishes to reconstruct the history of thought in the Philippines will first of all have to peruse the published works in philosophy. There were such. A Spanish writer, Francisco de Acuña, says in 1607 that the textbooks in philosophy published at the University of Santo Tomás were inferior in no way to the best of those written at the Universities of Salamanca and Alcalá.<sup>13</sup> Father Bazaco, who quotes this author, himself states that during the second half of the 19th century "conscientiously written textbooks in philosophy were published."<sup>14</sup>

Certainly Father Bazaco is referring to the work of Cardinal Ceferino González and possibly to that of Father Joaquín Fonseca. Ceferino González came to Manila as a young religious in 1848. He finished his studies here and at the age of twenty-eight became professor of theology in the University of Santo Tomás. It was there that he wrote his first important and perhaps his best work, *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás* (Manila, 1864). Not long after this he returned to Spain where he led a brilliant scholastic renaissance. The appearance of such a luminary seems to indicate the presence also of learned teachers to form him. A biographer of González who has studied the point does not venture to draw this conclusion. He says: "We do not know the names of his teachers, but there would not be anyone who stood out in any notable degree. Neither in Spain, troubled at that time with

<sup>13</sup> Bazaco, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

political disturbances, . . . with its studies in a lamentable state of collapse, nor in the distant Philippines was there any great opportunity for help in acquiring even a decent knowledge of philosophy. So the formation of Father Ceferino was properly speaking that of a self-taught man."<sup>15</sup>

This author mentions Father Joaquín Fonseca as the only possible influence on Father González. Father Fonseca was a contemporary of Father González at Santo Tomás and received part of his education there. He was Rector of the University twice and author of several philosophical works. He returned to Spain and engaged in a controversy with the famous Menéndez y Pelayo, in which he manifested a deep knowledge of St. Thomas' writings.

Whether González owes anything to Fonseca or not, the appearance of two such eminent men at the university, and as products at least in part of the university, seems evidence of a healthy philosophical life within the institution. Cardinal González does not himself give us any direct information, and in fact complains about the inadequacy of the library, a complaint perhaps not fully justified in view of the fact that he was able to write his greatest philosophical work there.

This then is the first work of the historian of philosophy in the Philippines: to study the books, evaluate their scholarship, identify their tendencies and influences. Then he must turn to the manuscripts. Most of the lectures in philosophy, especially in the early days, were dictated. There were commonly no texts. There probably exist in the archives of the various religious orders in Spain, as well as in the various national archives of Spain, and possibly of Mexico and even of the Philippines, philosophical manuscripts of former professors of the Philippines. Ramón Ceñal, S.J., has just made a study of 60 manuscripts of the 17th and 18th century in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid. Among them is one

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<sup>15</sup> Guillermo Fraile, O.P., "El P. Ceferino González y Díaz Tuñón," *Revista de Filosofía*, 15 (1956), 466-67.

José Rufo who taught in Argentina.<sup>16</sup> Possibly the same source will reveal manuscripts for the Philippines.

In Mexico, Bernabé Navarro has studied 212 manuscripts of courses of philosophy in distinct colleges, written by Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits, in an attempt to trace the history of philosophical ideas in Mexico. Another author, Pérez Marchand, has studied the records of the Inquisition to find what philosophical opinions might have been cited for condemnation or examination.<sup>17</sup>

There will be other documentary sources to be investigated. For example Father de la Costa has cited an inaugural disquisition of a professor at the Jesuit College of Manila in 1757, in which he defended the thesis: "Between the metaphysical predicates of the same individual only a *distinctio rationis ratiocinatae* exists which is made by purely formal precision."<sup>18</sup> This is evidence of the existence at this college of a semi-nominalist position which had a certain vogue among Jesuits during the 17th and 18th centuries.

There will be evidence in other writings which are not strictly philosophical. This will be especially true where there is question of political philosophy. Those men who are considered the philosophers of the Revolution, like Rizal and Mabini, will not only reveal in their writings their own opinions, but also may give some indication of the sources of them. Teodoro Llamzon, S.J., in a dissertation for a master's degree at Berchmans College, Cebu City, has given some interesting information regarding the philosophical climate about the time Rizal was studying philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila. They were very much aware of the *Aeterni Patris* there. The text used a few years after Rizal's graduation, and perhaps while he was there, was not—as one would expect—a Spanish Suarezian, but an Italian Thomist, Matteo Liberatore, S.J., the foremost name of the scholastic revival.<sup>19</sup> Other dissertations

<sup>16</sup> Ceñal, "Manuscritos," pp. 63 & 70.

<sup>17</sup> Peñalver, *art. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> de la Costa, *art. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> Teodoro Llamzon, S.J., *The Philosophical Studies and Tenets of Dr. Jose Rizal* (1950).

in Berchmans College treat of more restricted aspects of the same theme.<sup>20</sup>

The history of the period since 1900 would not offer great difficulty. Philosophy in general started timidly after the complete upheaval at the turn of the century. Catholic philosophy, as it regained strength, would be inspired by the neo-scholastic revival. Outside of Catholic schools only the University of the Philippines would merit study in those early years. In the first University of the Philippines catalog, 1910-1911, Bulletin No. 1, a department of history appears under Alexander Wrottesley Salt. With him philosophy was born in the state university in two courses: History of Philosophy and Sociology.

Since then philosophy at the University of the Philippines has meant History of Philosophy, Logic and Psychology. Moreover there has been emphasis on cognate branches like Sociology, Political Economy and Education. There was no Metaphysics. The professors nearly all came from universities in the United States; Columbia and Chicago figure prominently.

It is obvious that this article has been more concerned with asking questions than answering them. The problem of the historian will be to dig out the facts, analyze them, discover the currents of thought, identify their sources, trace their results, evaluate the caliber of the thinking. To do this he cannot rely on catalog entries and external forms, however honorific. Philosophy is a search for the truth and the historian of philosophy will try to discern how sedulously this search has been pursued.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. José Castillo, S.J., *Philosophical Analysis of Rizal's Political Principles in Noli Me Tangere* (1950); Aristides Hilario, *A Philosophical Criticism of Rizal's Principles of Revolution in El Filibusterismo*, (1951); J. Manuel Montemayor, S.J., *A Philosophical Evaluation of Mabini's Idea of the State*, (1953); Glicerio Abad, S.J., *Rizal's Philosophical Tenets as Revealed in His Letters to Father Pastells* (1958).