THE RECEPTION OF ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY IN LATIN AMERICA

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1. This essay, whilst freely drawing on previous work by the author (Salmerón, 1991, 1992), endeavours to provide a more comprehensive view of the question of how philosophical analysis has been received in Latin America, throughout the entire process. Amongst other evident limitations, it is clearly impossible to present the full depth of the historical questions arising from this period of analytical contributions to the different national philosophical traditions; the terrain that we would wish to cover is so broad that no text of such dimensions could possibly include all the relevant facts. The essay provides a possible interpretation of an overview of philosophical activity in Latin America, without presuming to exhaustive coverage at any point. It presupposes, naturally, that such an interpretation would only enjoy the support necessary if backed up by an integral view of the history of ideas in Latin America during our century – a history that is yet to be written, but the complexity of which is acknowledged in other studies (for example, those brought together by Jorge Gracia in 1984 and in 1988-89).

A further point should be made before proceeding. The emphasis in this discussion will be determined by the way in which the panorama is contemplated – leading, inevitably, to some involuntary remarks stemming from my own experience. I am, for example, much less familiar with the philosophical life of Brazil than with that of other countries like Argentina or Peru, and, on the other hand, I am more at home with that of México. This latter act has allowed me, in the final section, to provide a separate discussion of the Mexican case. Such disequilibrium, although rendering the information void in other fields, seems less important here where it functions only to illustrate the features of a landscape – a task for which a personal testimony seems more effective than analysis of some seminal work. Finally, the expression "analytical philosophy", a term with which many of the figures mentioned below may not be readily associated, is used here in the widest sense, embracing an array of possibilities, from a way of viewing the problems of the philosophy of science and the developments of modern

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logic, to the philosophical consideration of language and conceptual analysis. It could perhaps be characterised as a voyage "from Vienna to Cambridge", or even to the Oxford of the 1960s.

2. Logical empiricism, as it arose in the Vienna circle, was seen in Latin America as the renaissance of the old antipositivist polemic. A small book written by Antonio Caso, and published in México in 1941 (Caso, 1941), recounts the history of positivism, from Comte and Mill to the Vienna circle, and devotes important central chapters to Mach and Poincaré. The work culminates with what Caso calls "critical positivism" and its opposition to the phenomenology of Husserl and his disciples, an opposition of two philosophical currents which the author elsewhere refers to as "the most important and grandiose debate in contemporary thought". A review of this small book written by José Gaos a few months afterwards recalls the Husserl-Schick debate, and praises the Mexican scholar for having used the phenomenology of the period prior to neopositivism as an argument against this philosophical position (Gaos, 1941).

In reality, Caso's judgement about the dimensions of the debate may be incorrect in terms of European philosophy, especially if one considers explicit polemics. But in Latin America, keeping the dimensions in proportion and considering that there was little experience here of theoretical controversies, it must be recognised that analytical philosophy was received in the years following Caso's text precisely by phenomenologists – and not always without conflict. One of Caso's pupils from the later generations, Nicolás Molina Flores (who later became the translator of Carnap and Ayer) threw in his lot with logical empiricism and became, from the 1940s, its first Mexican defender.

This emphasis on the phenomenologists should not be taken to imply that there was no work during these years on the philosophy and history of science: the books of García Bacca (one of them printed in Spain: García Bacca, 1936, and others prepared in Ecuador, but published in México), which appeared at the same time as Caso's, prove the opposite. But at the same time, they lead us to the conclusion that, at least in these two countries, it was not because of science or logic that an interest in philosophical analysis arose (García Bacca, 1940, 1941, 1942).

3. In the first months of 1945, Gaos published a commentary in which he welcomed the appearance of the first Latin American journal "devoted exclusively to philosophy". The journal was *Minerva: Revista Continental de Filosofía*, which Mario Bunge had started publishing the year before in Buenos Aires, together with the sister series *Cuadernos*. Gaos also wrote a review of an issue of the *Cuadernos* written by Risieri Frondizi.

In spite of the fact that the journal had a brief life and that it opened its doors to authors of the most diverse philosophical trends, its general orientation reflected an obvious willingness to distance itself from the dominant tradition of Latin American universities during the 1940s, i.e., that of Ortega and philosophy in German. It also published, in one of its first numbers, an article on the Vienna circle by Hans A. Lindemann. Lindemann, at the time residing in Buenos Aires, had pursued his studies in Austria and had a first hand view of the activities of the circle, and of its internal controversies. These anecdotes call to mind the example of Schajowicz: on his arrival to the University of Puerto Rico, Ludwig Schajowicz, coming from a similar philosophical experience in Vienna, had to modify the nature of his research in the face of the solidity of the dominant tradition, and neither his teaching nor his written work reflected his initial interests.

In Buenos Aires, though, matters took a different course. Bunge, who came from a scientific background and worked in theoretical physics, began to concentrate exclusively on philosophical questions. In 1956, he was even appointed to the chair of philosophy of science, and there established a broad programme of activities, not limited to his own country, for almost a decade, until the political situation led him to pursue his career abroad. In 1959, Harvard University published his book *Causality: The Place of the Causal Principle in Modern Science* in English, the first work written in Latin America on this subject from a point of view that can be called analytical (Bunge, 1959). The next year *Antología Semántica* was published in Spanish; edited by Bunge himself, it included texts by Russell, Carnap, Hempel, Tarski, Quine, Goodman and Max Black, amongst others (Bunge, 1960). It was an opportunity for the editor to distinguish between the various currents of philosophical analysis and to identify himself with a neopositivist and neopragmatic source. At the same time, it reflected his lack of interest in the analysis of ordinary language. In any case, it defended a position that was open to all the traditional concerns of logic, the theory of knowledge and ontology.

Frondizi's background was different, as was his influence also. He had studied in the United States, first in Harvard (with Whitehead, C. I. Lewis, and R. B. Perry) and then in Michigan (with Sellars). He always considered himself an empiricist, the defender of a "humanist empiricism", and he was in fact a severe critic of the more scientist and technical tendencies in analytical philosophy. But his work represents, in both subject matter and style, a rejection of the dominant tradition, influenced by the literature in German. Frondizi taught in Venezuela and Puerto Rico, and finally, during his last political exile, in the United States, where he died in 1983. The years he worked in Argentina (nearly a decade between 1956 and 1966) constitute



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