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Phenomenographic Interpretation of the Spanish Universalist School: Part I/III

Cover Page Footnote

Translation Part I: Jorge Conesa-Sevilla



**Phenomenographic Interpretation of the Spanish Universalist School:
Part I/III**

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the XX Century, it exists as anti-Spanish propaganda, a stable narrative promoted since the XVI Century: The *black legend* (*Leyenda Negra*). This is one of the main reasons why, frequently, the Spanish *pensamiento* has been reconstructed in a half-hazard and incomplete manner. Paradoxically, this is the result of a past with high relevancy, developing as it did as imperial Catholic culture, integrating and civilizing different peoples as humanly and morally equals. More deservedly, a modern sense of a “self,” rightfully examined, is the idea of a “self” created by the School of Salamanca (see also The Spanish Universalist School) during the course of the thinking behind and resolution of the problem encountered in the new world; that is, the meeting of Europeans and the American Indians, the full recognition of “the other” as “oneself”—as equals, as souls. This is due to the integration of peoples made possible by miscegenation (*mestizaje*) and the concomitant development of ideas about human and judicial rights.

“The various European modalities of ‘the enlightenment’ coincide only and coalesce around a handful of abstract principles on education and the development of humanity. They also diverge in all possible ways in character, and in their execution and implementation around the world. There exists as many “enlightenments” as cultural milieus capable of producing them and for this reason, its phenomenography reveals one of the richest, more extensive, and complex realizations of modern culture.”

~ Pedro Aullón de Haro (Conclusion, Part III)

1. Introduction

The origin of our investigation is rooted in the study of the creation of the universal history of letters and science by Juan Andrés (1740-1817), in the universal and comparative linguistics of Lorenzo Hervás (1735-1809), in the universal epistemology and musicology expression by Antonio Eximeno (1729-1808), and the Americanism that was added, in various forms, by Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731-1787), Juan Ignacio Molina (1740-1829) and Celestino Mutis (1732-1808). The latter series was completed by the Franciscan professor turned missionary and man of action, Junípero Serra (1713-1784).

Additionally, the above work was complemented by Jesuit followers such as José Gumilla (1686-1750), and the mathematician and explorer of the Orinoco River, Pedro Murillo Velarde (1696-1753), the latter a polymath missionary working at the University of Manila.

Once begun, our investigation made it clear that the above great minds were only salient elements of a prodigious, wider and emergent scientific web that went beyond the above list of roving professors: an extraordinary school disseminated around the world of mostly Jesuits also gathered by circumstances in northern Italy (due to the Spanish expulsion of Jesuits by Charles III in 1767). All these scholars shared a well-informed and universalist vision.

Instead of focusing on the specific contributions of these thinkers, as phenomenographic methodology,ⁱ it was necessary to privilege (identify) those idea-elements that were innovative and outstanding. The final contributions of said school, as a third generation of thinkers and ideas to the late 19th Century, were the great scientists and meteorologists Benito Viñes (1837-1893) working in La Habana (Ramos Guadalupe, 2023) and Federico Faura (1840-1897) in Manila.

Consisting our research, at its onset, of a grounding in well-determined theoretical and disciplinary concepts, it became clear that our perspective was different than that of mainstream historians, the latter producing disperse commentaries which oscillated between cultural or political history and ideology. At times, it was evident that some historians went out of their way to malign the Jesuits. There were exceptions to these lacunae, for example, the erudite but sporadic contributions of Menéndez Pelayo, Julián Marías, Pérez de Ayala, and Franco Venturi. Starting in the decade of the 1960s, there was a recognition, spearheaded by Julián Marías in his book, *La España posible en tiempo de Carlos III*, that the Spanish XVIII Century, aside from valuable work written in English and French, was not very well known.ⁱⁱ

Be that as it may, it was in a sense a veritable disgrace that at the beginning of the XX Century, thinkers of the so-called generation of 1998, had only a limited horizon to work with around the paradigm 'The Fall of Spain,' leaving out important questions, making it that much more difficult to make informed and comprehensive analyses. It is important to note that our investigations of the Universalist School took place in the scholarly adversarial landscape of the last three decades of the XX Century. Presently, in all fairness, things have changed in some sectors of the intelligentsia, thanks in some measure to the work from our own *Instituto Juan Andrés de Comparatística y Globalización*.

Regardless, it is rather important to keep in mind the above historical generalizations, if for no other reason than because the above shortcomings, as "arguments," have existed and continue to exist without a serious historiographic foundation, but merely as polemics and ideologies. Apropos, and since the beginning of the XX Century, it exists as anti-Spanish *black legend* (*Leyenda Negra*), a stable narrative promoted since the XVI Century.¹ This is one of the main reasons why, frequently, the Spanish *pensamiento* has been reconstructed in a half-hazard and incomplete manner. Paradoxically, this is the result of a past with high relevancy, developed as it did as imperial Catholic culture, integrating and civilizing different peoples as humanly and morally equals.ⁱⁱⁱ

It exists, also, some very relevant facts, albeit historically uncomfortable, with both psychological and moral repercussions, that are habitually unspoken and even silenced, but cannot be omitted if one is to completely explore these cultural trends and legacy. In reality, this problem can be quickly summarized in historic-political terms: after the Napoleonic exploits and invasions, a XX Century plagued and mired with Germanic Nazism, Soviet Communism, and the predatory colonialism of Africa, only with great difficulty could an emergent occidental politics acknowledge the preexistence of the School of Salamanca and its legal rights and humanistic contributions in America exercised and implemented from Patagonia to today's California. The consequences of the aforementioned situations and historical antecedents are as follow: 1) An insistence in magnifying criticisms raised by Bartolomé de Las Casas, first as a layman and then as a friar, who reacts and responds to an initial and erroneous policy. 2) The persistence to erase the intellectual contributions of Vitoria and the School of Salamanca by the Spanish court in the areas of cultural dissemination and historiographic philosophy.^{iv}

In our judgement, a modern sense of a "self" (see also *PsycheNatur/Conesa* in this volume) is not conceivable in the Kantian sense and much less so in its further German 'classism' elaboration as "*romantik*." The latter is an aspect of the German philosophical notion of "self," or in its subsequent literary and philosophical reiterations established, by extension, in Europe during the XIX Century. More deservedly, a modern sense of a "self," rightfully examined, is the idea of a "self" created by the School of Salamanca during the course of the thinking behind and resolution of the problem encountered in the new world. That is, the meeting of Europeans and the American Indians, the full recognition of "the other" as "oneself"—as equals, as souls. This

¹ *Translator's Note 1*: The so-called anti-Spain *Leyenda Negra*, began as English and Dutch propaganda, and was used for political reasons in the United States, and endures to this day as a fundamental rhetoric within Indigenous rights movements, simplistically overlooking and clumping together all aspects of conquest and colonization as self-serving victimhood narratives without understanding (or acknowledging) their rather complex and diverse history.

is due to the integration of peoples made possible by miscegenation (*mestizaje*) and the concomitant development of ideas about human and judicial rights.

The above dynamics give rise to our modern conception of the “self” considering as it does the whole of humanity as well as a questioning of what is humanity. Meanwhile, two centuries later, and despite the work of the School of Salamanca, Hegel and many others continued insulting non-European human beings.

The author has argued that the European enlightenment, its active and ongoing interpretation, has not been fully explicated. Furthermore, and in connection to the latter, its comparative methodology, its modern rendition, has been misrepresented. This does not mean that further questioning about the enlightenment has not been a continuing enterprise from Kant to Adorno, and more recently by Horkheimer. However, it is evident that today, the enlightenment as an entity, all its components, and the *comparatística* – all having a fitted relationship -- have not been fully broached. Recently, we ventured a tentative answer to these problems and questions in *Idea de la Ilustración: Estudios sobre la Escuela Universalista* (Aullón de Haro, ed., 2022).

The fact is that the enlightenment, oriented toward the progress of science, education, and man’s emancipation, was not a unilinear process or progression as we were frequently led to believe (neither epistemologically nor ideologically speaking), and that different “enlightenments” have defined diverse cultural fields.

2. The Universalist School: Phenomenographical Determinants

The Spanish or Iberic Universalist School of the XVIII Century, unlike the School of Salamanca, has only been reconstructed or interpreted in recent decades, and is delimited by recent investigations of about one-hundred authors. Nevertheless, its history is represented by a great quantity and diversity of works, both in terms of their conceptualization and geographical reach, which goes to explain, in part, its belated reconstruction. This collective work is due, almost completely, to immigrant religious professors (as it was common in Spain then), the majority of whom were Jesuits.

These efforts, without a doubt, constitute one of the great moments of Hispanic culture and universal humanism, its recognition modifying our understanding of the enlightenment, comparative history (and its history), and processes of globalization. It contributes to the former a fourth fundamental element, to the second, a prior and modern interpretation, and to the latter a subsequent phase to the discovery of America and the influence of the School of Salamanca. That is, it establishes a new intellectual period within the first globalization as well as a precedent to today’s reiterations and forms.²

The Universalist School, embracing as it did comparative methodologies, obligates their use to studies of the European enlightenment. This approach, as we will see later in this text, will allow us to properly discern the various modern characterizations of the enlightenment: its modes and attitudes, its dimensions and virtues. The Universalist School, responsible as it was for the

² The “second” or actual globalization proceeds from the XX Century to present-day forms, driven by an acceleration of transportation modes and vectors, the new supra-national order of markets, electronic media, and, it could be argued, informational content of inferior quality as compared to the first globalization processes.

culmination of the first globalization through the School of Salamanca and “the question” of the new world, emerged from a state of dual consciousness: one caused by *migratory convulsion* (caused by the expulsion of the Jesuits from the empire in 1767), and a resultant scientific conception of the known universe rooted in humanism.

Therefore, we might better appreciate the Universalist School as a major and significant precedent to present-day globalization, the latter, and relatively speaking, bleached of humanistic and intellectual content, and embedded as it is in post-humanism and post-truth. The precedent of the Universalist School amounts to the privileging of a universalist wisdom, vis-à-vis a deeper and possible reflection and betterment of the problematics of our time. In short, a universalist thinking or orientation will be the foundation, in our opinion, of the background and sustenance toward a more constructive globalization. We will add nuance to these claims later on.

There exists a decisively complex and historiographic factor which contributes to explaining the phenomenographic circumstances of the Universalist School and of its difficulty in being detected. I am referring to the dialectical correlation of applied *periodization* (effective periodization within historiography). That is, a universalist outlook did not determine in Spain epistemological and *phenological* correlations beyond an anti-encyclopedist stance. At the same time an English empiricism put forth a theory of knowledge which underlined subjectification processes which were pre-romantically oriented. On another front, the French encyclopedism adhered to a sensory-based (even sensual) and much more non-subjective external and elemental orientation, and for the same neoclassical reasons, with proclivities toward an open socio-political rationality -- precursors of modern ideological trends.

In sum, in both cases, England and France, the effect was toward immediate dialectical correlations: the former toward cultural and artistic Romanticism, the latter assisting in political Revolution. One could, at the same time, compare or distinguish the above orientations with the German enlightenment or to the idealism that follows it, culminating, after an English empirical influence, in not merely a pre-romanticism but into a grand *Romantik*. In contrast, facing the immediacy of the above historic-stylistic outlooks, the Universalist enlightenment proffered connections that were neither immediate nor easily localizable within these discourses, but instead relativistic to the integration of classic humanistic and modern empirical sciences within the sphere of emerging comparative methods based on Spanish intercontinental existential realities.

(End of Part I)



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ⁱ Phenomenographic methodology, in my judgement, consists of a hermeneutical elaboration which conjoins historiography and thinking, that is, a history-theoretical approach and practice. In the same way that phenomenology begets hermeneutics, in this case hermeneutics is employed as phenomenography through which the history of thinking and ideas are mutually referenced and maintain a foothold on a ‘real connection’ as well as to possible reconstructive categories, be it methodological in nature, or originating in the history of thinking and ideas.

ⁱⁱ Marias (1966) highlighted some problems and wrote about some authors, and in particular, about Juan Andrés.

ⁱⁱⁱ Also, there were notable exceptions to the black legend ideology: In North America, James Brown Scott (1928) highlighted the thinking and work about international rights while studying the intellectual contributions of the School of Salamanca, and in particular, the work of Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suárez (XVI-XVII) who created and dictated to the monarchy a criterium for the equality of Indians and the anteposition of morality over power, contributing in this decisive manner toward a vision of an integrated America as a shared civilization inspired by an imperative of *derechos de gente* (*Ius Gentium*; peoples’ rights). (See also Pereña, 1952 and 1973.) The last examples of this civilizing process can be traced to the professorial and religious work of what we refer to as the Spanish Universalist School of the XVIII Century, among them, the great Americanists Francisco Javier Clavijero (México), Juan Ignacio Molina (Chile), Celestino Mutis (Colombia), Junípero Serra (California).

^{iv} In another monograph, it would be interesting to undertake an analysis of the covalent synergies and their factors of this phenomenon. In any case, ideologies have contributed to these synergies.