

Letras Hispanas

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TITLE: *Filosofía y culturas hispánicas: Nuevas perspectivas*

AUTHOR: Nuria Morgado and Rolando Pérez, eds.

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In reviewing this book, the first thing to note is the simple necessity of such a volume. In the Anglo-American philosophical academic realm, although “foreign” language skills are not altogether neglected, in general knowledge of Spanish and of Spanish-language cultures is at best a tertiary interest. For the most part, if English-speaking philosophers have one “foreign” language, it will be one of either Greek or Latin, or one of either German or French; if they have two, it will be either both of the ancient options or one of the ancient and one of the modern; if they have three, both of the ancient and one modern, or both modern and one ancient; if more, then they might add Arabic, or Farsi, or Sanskrit, or Chinese, or Russian... But the list grows long indeed before most philosophers arrive at Spanish. While each philosopher will have their reasons for choosing to emphasize the cultural realms that they learn to enter by way of an ability to engage directly with texts in the original language, the de-emphasis on Spanish creates a strange and regrettable blind spot in the Anglo-American philosophical academy. This blind spot is particularly problematic in encountering Spanish and Latin American texts and cultural issues of the 20th and 21st centuries, precisely because philosophical concepts are often explicitly or implicitly important to writers, producers and agents of Spanish and

Latin American culture, or at least because philosophical concepts offer highly fruitful hermeneutic strategies for the “reader’s” engagement with that culture.

These comments are meant to highlight the desirability of such a volume as Morgado and Pérez’s *Filosofía y culturas hispánicas*. The book brings together a selection of philosophically-informed essays from a group of authors who bridge the too-wide disciplinary gap between philosophy departments and Spanish departments, and a group of themes that demonstrate the richness of this approach to a broad selection of cultural topics: as the editors note in their Introduction,

Los ensayos aquí reunidos dan fe de ello: la filosofía puede surgir del ámbito de la literatura, el lenguaje, las artes visuales, la arquitectura o la política, y, por ende, del encuentro mismo entre las diversas disciplinas. (10)

Leading scholars from both philosophy and Hispanic-studies backgrounds contribute studies that should demonstrate to philosophers the desirability of opening up to the Spanish-speaking world, and to Hispanists the desirability of stocking the hermeneutic toolbox with philosophically-informed approaches.

The volume’s four sections represent two “geographical” foci, around Spain and

Latin America respectively, and two “topical” foci, Cultural Studies and Politics/History. In the Spain section, William Childers contributes a study of Marx’s own reading of and use of the figure of Sancho Panza in the German’s critique of the philosophy of Max Stirner; Nuria Morgado convincingly demonstrates a Kantian substrate in Antonio Machado’s *Juan de Mairena*; Goretti Ramirez analyzes María Zambrano’s concept of twisted time in relation to the exiled subject in the philosopher’s 1989 autobiography *Delirio y destino*; and Guadalupe Arbona studies José Jiménez Lozano’s recourse to Kierkegaard’s humanistic religiosity in the face of an unsatisfying postmodernity. The Latin American section applies philosophical concepts and readings to another broad selection of issues: Marcos Wasem offers an analysis of anarchist ideas in relation to feminist contestation of 20th-century bourgeois ideals of the family vis-à-vis “amor libre”; Sylvia Dapía reads one of Borges’s best-known short stories, “El etnógrafo,” through the lens of the US analytic philosopher Donald Davidson; and Alejandro Riberi returns to Borges by way of Fritz Mauthner’s proto-Wittgensteinian critique of language as vehicle for knowledge.

The volume’s second half trades the geographical division for a conceptual one. The section marked as “Estudios culturales” offers intricate studies of a wide variety of cultural productions: Adrián Izquierdo analyzes the trans-Atlantic reception and “neo-baroque”

use of Luis de Góngora in the 1950s Brazilian poet Horácio Costa; Laura Sáñez studies the contestatory power of humor and comics typified by Quino Lavado’s iconic strip *Mafalda*; Germán Labrador in a similar vein examines urban contestation by means of graffiti in the context of what he names *la estética de la ruina*; and Benjamin Fraser examines the presence of Lefebvre (and ultimately Bergson) in the urban philosophy of Manuel Delgado Ruiz, and how these ideas conduce to the creation of a city structured by capital. The volume’s final section, centering on politics and history, includes chapters by Linda Martín Alcoff on Enrique Dussel’s “transmodernity,” which argues that European “modernity” actually constitutes itself in and against the encounter with the Amerindian world, not before that encounter; Rolando Pérez, who presents a reading of Peruvian poet César Vallejo by way of the primacy of ethics in philosophers Emmanuel Lévinas and Enrique Dussel; José Antonio Losada shows the use and abuse of Scholastic philosophy in service of the Francoist dictatorship in the 1960s; and Oswaldo Zavala mines philosopher Alain Badiou’s ideas of situational ethical truths to examine contemporary Mexican narco-narratives.

Altogether, it is to be hoped that this volume represents the beginning of an excellent collaboration and regard between and among philosophers and scholars of Hispanic cultures. Such collaboration, however long overdue, must surely be mutually fruitful.