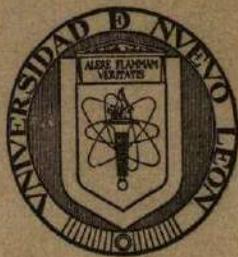


# HUMANITAS

ANUARIO DEL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS HUMANÍSTICOS

16



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significa tener el don sobrenatural de la fe. Su convicción era el término de su búsqueda racional. No le era posible, naturalmente, ir más lejos. Y Dios es "débil" en estos casos; no resiste a su creatura y le da la fe. Por eso Maurras se convirtió.

### THE STRUCTURE OF ANTI-POSITIVIST PHILOSOPHY IN LATIN AMERICA

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AT THE TURN of the twentieth century there was an initiation of independent philosophical speculation in Latin America which has formed the basis for succeeding developments in Hispano-American thought. Breaking the stranglehold of positivism on the Ibero-American mind, such thinkers as Antonio Caso and José Vasconcelos in Mexico, and Alejandro Korn and Carlos Vaz Ferreira in Argentina and Uruguay, took the suggestions of an emerging European and Anglo-American vitalism and wrought them into a distinctive pattern of thought that stressed the significance of ideals and liberty in human life. Taken together, the philosophers of the Latin American golden age created a specific philosophical mentality that has much to offer contemporary thought and that has been duplicated nowhere else in the history of philosophy.

Despite the many commentaries on the philosophers of the golden age there has as yet been no serious attempt to show how the major thinkers in Latin American philosophy developed a rationally defensible alternative to other twentieth century movements. Leopoldo Zea has argued that Ibero-American philosophy should be evaluated as "*filosofía sin más*", but even he has been far more concerned with the quest for a distinctively Latin American philosophy, the task of developing a Latin American history of ideas and problems in the sociology of knowledge than in considering the actual contributions of Hispano-American thinkers to twentieth century philosophy. Writers who succeeded the philosophers of the golden age, such as Zea, Arturo Ardao, Alberto Zum Felde, and Francisco Romero, have generally remarked on the unsystematic character, independence, anti-dogmatism and anti-positivism of their predecessors' works. They have praised the philosophers of the golden age as catalyzers,

teachers, initiators and founders of national and continental traditions, but they have not seen fit to subject their work to critical, philosophical scrutiny. There are many reasons for this reluctance to take the thinkers of the golden age seriously as philosophers, among them a lingering Latin American inferiority complex, the status of the initiators as cultural heroes as well as philosophers, the continued search for the peculiarly Latin American character of Latin American thought and the dominance in Ibero-American philosophy of the history of ideas, the sociology of knowledge and the philosophy of culture. Ironically, the attempt to institute philosophy in Latin America as a respectable professional endeavour has diverted the attention of commentators away from the complex structure of thought generated in the golden age and towards the historical context in which this thought appeared. For someone who is sympathetic to the alternative presented by the initiators, this implicit depreciation of their actual philosophical mentality is a loss to world culture.

Considered separately, Caso, Vasconcelos, Korn, Vaz Ferreira, Romero and José Enrique Rodó, among others, differ in their approaches to philosophy and in their solutions to important philosophical problems. For example, the Mexicans tend to be more metaphysical than the South Americans, perhaps because the transition from positivism was more polemical in Mexico than it was either in Argentina or Uruguay. However, despite these differences, when the philosophies of the golden age are considered as a unit, they display a well-defined philosophical mentality, particularly with regard to questions of philosophical anthropology. Not all of the writers share this philosophical mentality or "spirit" in all respects, but it constitutes an ideal type against which the work of particular thinkers can be compared. The basic characteristic of the philosophers of the golden age is their use of vitalism, the philosophy of life and radical empiricism to forge a philosophy of struggle for human ideals, particularly liberty. While the philosophies of experience developed in Europe and North America tended to be monistic or pluralistic, the emphasis on ideals by Ibero-American thinkers tended to make their thought dualistic. This dualism of struggle is not metaphysical, but empirical, and reflects less upon the nature of the universe than upon the predicaments of human existence. Further, the monistic or pluralistic bias of European vitalism tended towards irrationalism, culminating in existentialism and pragmatism, while Latin American dualism encouraged an attempt to balance the claims of reason against those of will and feeling. The following discussion will clarify the philosophical mentality of the thought of the Latin American golden age with the aim of showing that this "spirit" is still a vital option for philosophical commitment in the present age of bureaucratic political and social organization, and of behavioristic and other forms of neo-positivistic ideology. While

the exposition will be relevant to the understanding of Latin American philosophy *per se*, its overriding aim is to show conclusively that Latin American philosophy is "*filosofía sin más*".

#### EXPANDED EMPIRICISM

Much of twentieth century thought can be usefully interpreted as a continued response to nineteenth century positivism in its Comtian, Marxian, Spencerian or other variants. Generally, there have been three positions with regard to the naturalistic and relativistic anthropologies of the past century. First, positivism has been rejected in favor of a renewed quest for certainty, whether epistemological or metaphysical. Phenomenology and neo-Thomism are exemplars of this tendency. Second, positivism has been accepted fundamentally and revised to meet criticisms generated by vitalistic philosophies and new developments in logic and natural science (for example, relativity theory). Exemplars of this tendency are neo-Marxism, neo-Freudianism, sociological functionalism, pragmatism, philosophy of science, logical positivism and linguistic analysis, which, despite their important differences, all share in common a rejection of metaphysics and an affirmation of the idea that philosophy is either a branch of science or a methodology for clarifying scientific practice. Third, positivism has been expanded to include all aspects of human experience, including those which do not seem to be amenable to the methods of natural science. This expansion has involved the abandonment of naturalism in favor of revised empiricisms, such as Bergson's vitalism, James's radical empiricism, Georges Gurwitsch's hyper-empirical dialectics, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and the various nontheistic existentialisms, process philosophies and radical pragmatisms. The hallmark of twentieth century expanded empiricism has been a recognition that the methods of the natural sciences are inadequate to describe and conceive of many aspects of human experience, and that new methods should be devised for such description and conception. This general characteristic, of course, has not meant that the many philosophers and movements sharing a commitment to expanded empiricism are in accord on their basic descriptions of human experience. For example, the hard conflict and bitter alienation of Sartrean existentialism is at variance with the easy cooperation and optimistic community of George Herbert Mead's social behaviorism. The issues dividing expanded empiricists have centered on how to describe most accurately the major configurations and dynamics of human experience and on how, within any particular description, the individual's will is and should be exercised. It is within the context of this third

response to positivism, expanded empiricism, that the Latin American philosophers of the golden age have made their contribution.

Phenomenology and the various strands of the metaphysical revival react against positivism by attempting to find a place to stand beyond the shifting results of the experimental method. Expanded empiricists revalue, or perhaps even better, transvalue science and scientific methods as phases of a wider human experience open to philosophical clarification. The initiators of twentieth century Latin American thought are clearly within the tradition of expanded empiricism. In his *Lógica Viva* Vaz Ferreira remarks that he is a witness to and participant in the greatest revolution or evolution in human intellectual history — the acknowledgment that thought is not exhausted by words.<sup>1</sup> Alejandro Korn resolutely embraces radical empiricism: "...we know nothing but the unextended instant between the past and the future; the perpetual and fugitive present. We only know the incessant passage of particular and relative facts in our intuition, not the absolute or the eternal".<sup>2</sup> Vasconcelos asserts that philosophy should begin with concrete experience, not abstract reasoning: "No modern thinker can escape the consideration of the concrete as the primary, positive and living reality. The concrete is manifested to us as indissolubly binding matter and form, and rebellious to abstract dissociations".<sup>3</sup> Rodó affirms the radical empiricist doctrine of the mutable self: "Each one of us is, successively, not *one*, but *many*".<sup>4</sup> Romero, continuing the thought of a preceding generation, rejects comprehensive rationalism: "In my view, we are before this dilemma: either we develop a notion of being according to pure rationality and make an account of the world of immediate reality impossible, or we admit elements repugnant to strict intelligibility and make possible the transit to the world given in experience".<sup>5</sup>

Squarely within the expanded empiricist response to positivism, characterized by a bias towards the concrete rather than the abstract, the synthetic rather than the analytic, the spontaneous rather than the habitual, the living rather than the mechanical, the immediate rather than the mediate, the mutable rather than the fixed, and the skeptical rather than the systematic, the

<sup>1</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, Carlos, "Lógica Viva", in Vaz Ferreira, *Estudios Filosóficos* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 1961), 94.

<sup>2</sup> KORN, Alejandro, "La Libertad Creadora", in Korn, *La Libertad Creadora* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1963), 98.

<sup>3</sup> VASCONCELOS, José, "Todología", in Vasconcelos, *Obras Completas*; tomo IV (México: Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, 1961), 824.

<sup>4</sup> RODÓ, José Enrique, "Motivos de Proteo", in Rodó, *Obras Selectas* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo), 269.

<sup>5</sup> ROMERO, Francisco, *Filosofía de Ayer y de Hoy* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1960), 116.

initiators of twentieth century Latin American philosophy created their specific mentality. Perhaps the most general and basic observation about the direction of Latin American philosophy is contained in Vasconcelo's distinction between reductive and constructive philosophies. Reductive philosophers decompose objects into their simplest elements and then, when they cannot rejoin these elements into the original whole, "leap outside of the real object disintegrated by reason and replace it with the concept, the entity, that reason gives us in a false synthesis by abstraction."<sup>6</sup> Constructive philosophers, in contrast, proceed by coordinating events into concrete wholes through a process of synthesis that can be compared to the creation of a symphony.<sup>7</sup> Constructive philosophy, which avoids both the naturalism of scientific philosophy and the conceptualism and intellectualism of traditional metaphysics, is the method of expanded empiricism — a method bearing striking resemblance to Sartre's procedure of totalization. This method or approach to philosophy is, however, highly personal and tentative. Expanded empiricism by itself does not give any specific guidelines for defining the structures, configurations or dynamics of experience. Negatively, it provides a weapon for those rebelling against a system. Positively, it opens up the possibility for defining the structure of human experience in accordance with value-commitments. There are, then, as many possible versions of constructive philosophy as there are deeply-held human concerns, serious predicaments and value-commitments. The initiators of the Latin American golden age were not primarily interested in clarifying the epistemological issues raised by expanded empiricism for their own sake. Instead, they attempted to use this doctrine of experience to break the yoke of positivism and to create a distinctive perspective on human experience derived in part from an interpretation of the Hispanic tradition and in part from the hope of instituting personal liberty and national autonomy in their public situation.

#### EMPIRICAL DUALISM

The constructive philosophies of the Latin American golden age have a typical structure that transcends the particular differences between them. In their descriptions of human experience, the initiators set up an irreducible dualism and then both describe and prescribe a continuous struggle to over-

<sup>6</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Todología", 833-4.

<sup>7</sup> VASCONCELOS, José, "El Monismo Estético", in Vasconcelos, *Obras Completas*; tomo IV, 10.

come one side of that dualism. The substance of the dualisms developed by Latin American philosophers pits creative liberty, aesthetic synthesis, disinterested commitment to ideals, and the flux of fermentative thought, against mechanistic determinism, material entropy, utilitarianism, and fixed and absolute systems. Underlying this content is a deeper philosophical structure that involves the uncompromising commitment to describe clearly the highest human ideals, joined with the equally intense commitment to describe realistically the limitations, failings, frustrations and coercions of human existence. It is within the tension set up between uncompromising idealism and intense realism that human beings struggle to realize their victories over physical and spiritual death; victories that can be no more than provisional.

In their development of empirical dualism, the philosophers of the golden age devise a distinctive perspective on philosophy. As expanded empiricists, they cannot define philosophy either as metaphysical speculation, a synthesis of the natural sciences, or a critique of the methods of the natural sciences. Committed to the principle that there are phases of human experience that cannot be submitted to scientific analysis, they interpret philosophy as a way of studying these phases of experience and as a way of relating those experiences that are amenable to scientific study to those that are not. On its face, such an interpretation of philosophy appears to be equivocal: Can the same approach be adequate both to studying a part of experience and to relating the various aspects of experience to one another? The apparent equivocation is resolved by making the processes of creative, coordinative, aesthetic or hyper-logical experience — the non-measurable, relatively indeterminate and non-mechanical experiences — the processes by which the entire range of human experiences is coordinated. For example, Korn defines philosophy as axiology and then shows how the process of valuation, defined as creative liberty, gives science its meaning in human existence as a tool for overcoming coercion and as a quest for knowledge. Similarly, Vasconcelos defines an "organic logic" that coordinates wholes by analogy rather than analyzing them by identity, and argues that this aesthetic logic is both the method of human freedom and the method by which the scientific and non-scientific phases of human experience can be related to one another. Vaz Ferreira identifies a hyper-logical process of "good sense" which is both irreducible to fixed procedures and the means by which various claims to knowledge are ultimately adjudicated. This humanization of positivism, a hallmark of the initiators of Latin American philosophy, is almost required by their empirical dualism. Eschewing metaphysics and scientific naturalism they can bridge the rifts they create in experience only by the processes associated with one end of the polarity, for example, the exercise of creative liberty, the creation of analogies, or the

exercise of hyper-logical good sense. This tends to give their thought an idealistic bias, but it is a humanistic, personalistic and empirical idealism, not an absolute idealism, or an idealism of pure ego, pure consciousness or metaphysical self.

Three case studies will illustrate how the same dualistic structure and "constructive" method appear in the works of superficially different philosophers. Alejandro Korn, José Vasconcelos and Carlos Vaz Ferreira are leading figures of the Latin American golden age. Korn is often identified as a neo-Kantian, Vasconcelos as an aesthetic monist and mystic, and Vaz Ferreira as an empiricist and skeptic. However, these designations are far more applicable to antological positions than to philosophies of human experience. Once what James called the metaphysical "over beliefs" are removed, the descriptions of human experience are strikingly similar.

#### ALEJANDRO KORN

Perhaps more than any of the other initiators, Alejandro Korn is an explicit dualist. His dualism is empirical rather than metaphysical or even epistemological, since with regard to the philosophy of experience he advances doctrines similar to those of William James's neutral monism and radical empiricism. In *La Libertad Creadora*, Korn develops an expanded empiricism that avoids the dogma of an original world of pure and immediate experience, and places the starting point for philosophy in the intuition of experience as it is lived in daily life. For Korn, there is no purified standpoint, either in the thinking self, the intuition of essence, the sense datum, or even the stream of consciousness. Instead, by intuition Korn means "the evident fact, the spontaneous and immediate knowledge constituted in unity by the synthetic apprehension."<sup>8</sup> This intuition is not purified of discursive elements, "since this ideal condition is never realized: pure intuition does not exist."<sup>9</sup> Thus, Korn asserts that precisely because he treats of experience he shuns the designation "empiricist", since "this sensualist concept supposes a simplicity that does not resist the most superficial examination and that tends to convert the act of knowing into a passive event."<sup>10</sup> In *Esquema Gnoseológico*, Korn broadens his notion of intuitions to encompass the doctrine of radical empiricism: "To know is to contemplate the content of consciousness — the concrete content that succes-

<sup>8</sup> Korn, "La Libertad Creadora", 61.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

sively occupies it, not consciousness itself, which is an inaccessible noumenon. This content lacks stability — it is a series of states, a process, a becoming, or an activity whose knowledge we will call experience.”<sup>11</sup>

It is from this critique of naive realism and dogmatic metaphysics that Korn turns to his positive project of developing an empirical dualism. In the essay, “Bergson”, Korn criticizes the French philosopher’s intuitionism and substitutes for it his own, more modest, intuition of dualism: “With a more coarse psychology I would limit myself to intuiting the opposition of the subject and object in consciousness and their concurrence in action as two parts of the same dynamic process. Dualism appears to me, in effect, as undeniable as its synthesis in action. And with regard to the mutual relation of the two principles, it appears to me that the gravest objection is diminished by eliminating the Cartesian concepts of thinking and extended substances. There remains only a polarized activity in which the I and its opposite are reciprocal functions. It is clear that such a position is limited to empirical evidence and avoids the ontological problem.”<sup>12</sup>

The significance of Korn’s empirical dualism for a philosophical anthropology is in the way he relates the poles of subject and object. In the essay, “Introducción al Estudio de Kant”, he argues that Kantian dualisms can be made empirical by reducing the split between subject and object to the experienced opposition between liberty and necessity. Necessity is objective in that it comprehends the succession of facts linked by the principle of physical causality into mathematical laws, and excludes personal will. Opposed to necessity is the subject, defined as action, “or better reaction in accord with values and finalities that it promulgates as the expression of its will.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, Korn’s empirical dualism is not only a philosophy of experience, but a philosophy of life stressing the continuous struggle for liberty in a world subject in many of its phases to inexorable necessity. In the essay on Kant he notes that if everything obeys necessity, the subject disappears. In *La Libertad Creadora* he asserts that the living conflict of consciousness is not a interplay of pallid abstractions, but a clash of antagonistic forces.<sup>14</sup> While Korn acknowledges a plurality of ideals in human existence — well-being, happiness, love, power, justice, sanctity, good, truth and beauty presupposing the attain-

<sup>11</sup> KORN, Alejandro, “Esquema Gnoseológico”, in Korn, *La Libertad Creadora*, 109.

<sup>12</sup> KORN, Alejandro, “Bergson”, in Korn, *Filósofos y Sistemas* (Buenos Aires: Colección Claridad, n. d.), 120-1.

<sup>13</sup> KORN, Alejandro, “Introducción al estudio de Kant”, in Korn, *Filósofos y Sistemas*, 57.

<sup>14</sup> KORN, “La Libertad Creadora”, 64.

ment of each of these is the creative freedom of the person.<sup>15</sup> The affirmation of values expresses the protest against coercion, and is synthesized in the concept of liberty: “This impulse has created human culture: let us call it, then, creative liberty.”<sup>16</sup> Through the exercise of creative liberty, the person — defined by Korn as the process of creative liberty — defies necessity in its forms of economic coercion and the more intimate coercion of the passions. So, in Korn’s philosophy epistemology and axiology are inseparable. The critique of experience discloses the dualism of subject and object, which is in turn resolved into the dualism of liberty and necessity. Liberty itself is the presupposition of all other values, because it is, in one of its aspects, the process of valuation. Not to affirm liberty is to submit to necessity, which is to eliminate the subject and to annul consciousness and experience. Korn does not say that the annihilation of consciousness is impossible, for if he did there would be no sense to his notion that human existence is a continuous struggle to affirm liberty and the other values that it makes possible. He merely states that the first act of valuation is the valuation that there be a valuing process, that creative liberty be sustained in the economic and personal orders of experience. It is in this sense that Korn’s notion that philosophy is essentially axiology can be best understood.

Korn’s central notion that human existence is a perpetual struggle against necessity translates in the ethical and social orders into a commitment to oppose economic, political, moral and, particularly, intellectual coercion. Teodoro Olarte Sáenz del Castillo remarks that in refusing to reconcile the dualisms he found in human existence, Korn presented a program for living in the world of strictly human experience: “He remains serene inside of the limits of experience; he does not permit himself to flee from consciousness; if he did, given his philosophical convictions, he would have fallen into the serious failing that the denounced with so much insistence: a lack of intellectual probity.”<sup>17</sup> Olarte notes that intellectual probity is, for Korn, a moral virtue. It is what sustains the struggle for creative liberty in the social and ethical orders, and what keeps it from becoming a tragic defiance of “Nothingness or the ‘absurd’”. Much as Korn’s thought and the philosophies of the other Latin American initiators may appear similar to existentialism, they are affirmations of the human rational will seeking ideals rather than declarations of absolute freedom in a cosmos without meaning. Perhaps the best

<sup>15</sup> KORN, Alejandro, “Axiología”, in Korn, *La Libertad Creadora*, 151.

<sup>16</sup> KORN, Alejandro, “El Concepto de Ciencia”, in Korn, *La Libertad Creadora*, 141.

<sup>17</sup> OLARTE SÁENZ DEL CASTILLO, Teodoro, “Alejandro Korn ante el Problema de la Metafísica”, in Universidad Nacional de la Plata, *Estudios sobre Alejandro Korn* (La Plata, 1973), 96.

evidence for this conclusion is that in Korn's philosophy the modest virtue of intellectual probity becomes the ground for leading a fully human life of creative liberty. Korn recognized that metaphysics and naturalism are always live options in human existence, regardless of the century in which one writes. Intellectual probity, then, is itself a hard won victory of creative liberty.

#### JOSÉ VASCONCELOS

Few philosophers are as different temperamentally and metaphysically as Alejandro Korn and José Vasconcelos. Korn's prose is direct and classical, while Vasconcelos's writing is rhapsodic and Baroque. Above all else, Korn rejects mysticism, Vasconcelos resolutely embraces mysticism and founds his speculation upon it. Korn remained "serene" inside of the limits of experience. All his life Vasconcelos searched for a spiritual home and eventually found it in the Catholicism of his youth. Korn leaves experienced dualisms in perpetual tension. Vasconcelos develops an elaborate metaphysical system of aesthetic monism. Yet despite these marked differences, the inner structures of the thought of Korn and Vasconcelos are remarkably similar.

In *Todología* Vasconcelos affirms a type of expanded empiricism that he calls "living experientialism" and that is aimed at coordinating "sense data, the rules of reason, the ends of the will" in an harmonious order.<sup>18</sup> In *Lógica Orgánica* he identifies experience with consciousness, using the latter category in a manner very similar to Korn: "Consciousness is the super-organism. It does not only connect the mental and the sentimental and give them coherence, but it also subordinates them to ends that are found neither in particular emotions nor in abstract ideas. Consciousness avails itself of everything within its range to realize ends and destinies".<sup>19</sup> Within this expanded empiricism, or "living experientialism", Vasconcelos develops the notion, central to his epistemology, that the process of knowing is an act of synthetic coordination rather than of analytic decomposition. Presupposing analysis is the synthesis of heterogeneous elements into wholes: "...what is central and distinctive about consciousness is the act coordinating the heterogeneous elements that form knowledge".<sup>20</sup> According to Vasconcelos it is a mistake to believe that human experience is mechanically constructed out of atomic units. In-

<sup>18</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Todología", 818.

<sup>19</sup> VASCONCELOS, José, "Lógica Orgánica", in Vasconcelos, *Obras Completas*; tomo IV, 570.

<sup>20</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Todología", 837.

stead, analytical reductions occur within a world of relatively structured experience constituted by synthetic acts. Agustín Basave Fernández del Valle observes that for Vasconcelos "before we know by analysis we know by synthesis: by the finalistic coordination of the data apprehended by consciousness".<sup>21</sup> Thus, Vasconcelos, like Korn, eschews the doctrine that there are pure intuitions. Rather, there are more or less clear intuitions of synthesis that form the basis for philosophical systems. In *El Monismo Estético* he remarks that while nineteenth century critical philosophy undermined traditional rationalistic doctrines so deeply that they cannot be revived, "nothing can destroy the intuition of synthesis, this eternal source of systems incomplete and equivocal — but systems".<sup>22</sup> The intuition of synthesis is aesthetic rather than intellectual: Wholes are coordinated by rhythm, harmony and counterpoint — Vasconcelos's key analogies — rather than by identity and contradiction. An "organic logic" is a necessary tool for clarifying the coordination of wholes. Functioning by setting up analogies between different phases of human experience, organic logic is a logic of comprehension rather than of understanding: "To understand is to analyze; to comprehend is synthesis, to conceive in entirety: to conceive the *Whole*".<sup>23</sup>

It is from this critique of conceptualism and rationalism that Vasconcelos turns to his constructive task of creating a dualistic philosophy of experience. Parallel and analogous to the acts of analysis and synthesis in thought are the processes of dispersion and harmonization in the realm of being. There is a continuous tension in every being between a drift towards entropy and an impulse towards aesthetic synthesis. Metaphysically, this tension is expressed as an interplay between different energetic processes, while experientially it is felt as a struggle for the attainment of ideals: "Being always exemplifies an energetic structure. All energetic structure is compounded, heterogeneous, and tends, on the one hand, to return to homogeneity and dispersion (through entropy), and, on the other hand, to maintain itself in the irregular equilibrium of life — in harmony".<sup>24</sup> Thus, while Vasconcelos argues that modern science affirms a "dynamic monism", because it discovers in the interior of matter "a movement whose analog is only encountered in the subjective order, in the interior of human consciousness", this monism embraces two distinctive directions in experience.<sup>25</sup> As it was for Korn, the interplay between the

<sup>21</sup> BASAVE FERNÁNDEZ DEL VALLE, Agustín, *La Filosofía de José Vasconcelos* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1958), 68.

<sup>22</sup> VASCONCELOS, "El Monismo Estético", 10.

<sup>23</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Lógica Orgánica", 619.

<sup>24</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Todología", 886.

<sup>25</sup> VASCONCELOS, "El Monismo Estético", 17.

two directions in experience is not contemplated by Vasconcelos with indifference, but is interpreted as a struggle for self-affirmation. The self is engaged in a continual process of attempting to surmount the drift towards entropy by exercising the function of synthetic coordination — Vasconcelos's equivalent to Korn's creative liberty. Just as for Korn the process of creative liberty became coextensive with the person, for Vasconcelos the process of coordinating wholes becomes coextensive with the self. In *Todología* Vasconcelos asks what there is in "the depth of his live and active monad". He finds that if he attempts to answer this query through applying analytical methods there is nothing at the core of the self. He is neither sensation, nor color, nor sound, nor vibration, nor thought, nor sentiment. However, applying constructive or synthetic methods, he finds that he is all of these fragments joined together through coordination. Thus, at the core of his being is the process of coordinating wholes — a response to the invasion of consciousness by "the thousand solicitations of the external world". Continuing his meditation he asks: What is coordination? He responds: "It is an irregular, periodic, at times weak, at times brilliant act that is produced in my consciousness and is my consciousness itself: the coordinative process".<sup>26</sup> As was Korn's process of creative liberty, Vasconcelos's coordinative process is the presupposition of all values and, therefore, must be affirmed, if any other values are affirmed. The self, or soul, struggles to achieve its autonomy, to keep from disintegrating: "The essence of the soul is to coordinate internal and external elements in order to affirm inside of the Universe the presence of an autonomous quantum of energy, a living factor, a unity that operates inside of the physical, but belongs to the spirit".<sup>27</sup> Thus, Vasconcelos's thought is as much a philosophy of life as it is a metaphysic.

As in Korn's case, Vasconcelos's philosophy of life is not existentialist, but anti-positivist and humanist. Vasconcelos criticizes Sartre for making such statements as "human existence is not what it is, but the contrary" and "the human being is a being that makes itself". He argues that these assertions betray a lack of attention to the results of experimental science. The second law of thermodynamics shows that in as much as things are being *unmade*, the human being must struggle perpetually to escape being drawn into this process: "Man . . . is germ and factor of creation because thinking engenders a new world that is opposed to the homogeneity of force in disintegration and contains this disintegration, saving from it the best in the Universe".<sup>28</sup> Thus, like Korn,

<sup>26</sup> VASCONCELOS, "Todología", 905.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 902.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 829.

Vasconcelos is less concerned with the problem of Nothingness or the absurd than with vindicating human values within the world-view sketched by positivism. Korn and Vasconcelos create super-positivisms in response to necessity and entropy rather than existentialisms in response to the death of God. Their struggle is the positive struggle to add to nature, to humanize it, rather than the negative struggle to survive in a world without certain or absolute meanings. Their dualisms are set up to deny the mechanical monisms of science. They are not absolute idealists, because they generally accept the positivistic interpretation of physical nature. They are, then anti-positivists in their reaction against mechanism, analysis, necessity and entropy, but they are super-positivists in their project of humanizing nature. Their primary philosophical enemies are scientific realists, not believers in absolute faiths. Vasconcelos shows this very clearly in an observation in *Historia del Pensamiento Filosófico*: "The destiny of nations and the future of humanity depends on the struggle of the two bands: the pigs of the soul who declare themselves realists and the hopeless who demand the good even at the cost of consuming reality. Humanity will return to the times of the cavemen if the band of accomodators ever predominates".<sup>29</sup>

#### CARLOS VAZ FERREIRA

The work of Carlos Vaz Ferreira is more fragmentary and less systematic than that of either Alejandro Korn or José Vasconcelos. Alberto Zum Felde observes that "Vaz Ferreira's entire critique is directed towards combatting systems; not particular systems, but all systems, or better yet, the spirit of systematization itself".<sup>30</sup> Zum Felde notes that "*Fermental* is one of Vaz Ferreira's favorite biochemical expressions, referring to ideas that, lacking a doctrinaire character, exercise a suggestive action on thought".<sup>31</sup> Vaz Ferreira's writings are reflective of his anti-systematic mentality, and substitute for the analytical precision of Korn and the aesthetic mysticism of Vasconcelos a tentative skepticism. Yet Emilio Oribe, who has compared Vaz Ferreira's and Korn's thought, finds the basic positions of the two philosophers quite similar:

<sup>29</sup> VASCONCELOS, José, "Historia del Pensamiento Filosófico", in Vasconcelos, *Obras Completas*; tomo IV, 157.

<sup>30</sup> ZUM FELDE, Alberto, *Proceso Intelectual del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Editorial Claridad, 1941), 379.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 376

"Both concentrated on the clarification and elucidation of a problem of tragic constancy in philosophy and history: the problem of Liberty".<sup>32</sup>

While Korn's dualism is epistemological and, perhaps, even ontological because of its sharp division between subject and object, and Vasconcelos's dualism is explicitly metaphysical, Vaz Ferreira's dualistic thought is strictly empirical and tempered by skepticism. Like Korn and Vasconcelos, Vaz Ferreira adopts a version of expanded empiricism. Thought cannot be exhausted by language and linguistic systems, but must be studied in its fermentative as well as its completed aspect. Korn, Vasconcelos and Vaz Ferreira each believed that he was participating in a philosophical revolution, and each one emphasized a different aspect of this revolution. For Korn the revolution was the institution of axiology as the central concern of philosophy, for Vasconcelos it was the supplanting of analytical thought by coordinative thought and for Vaz Ferreira it was the insight that thought outruns words: "The greatest revolution or evolution in human intellectual history, more important than any scientific or artistic transformation, because it treats of something even more general than these, is the change in humanity's *mode of thinking*: it is making thought independent of words".<sup>33</sup>

On the basis of this expanded empiricism, Vaz Ferreira sets up a dualism, not between modes of experiencing or modes of being, but between modes of thinking. He contrasts thinking in terms of systems and thinking skeptically and creatively: "There are two ways of making use of an exact observation or a just reflection: the first is to draw from it, consciously or unconsciously, a *system* meant to be applied to every case; the second is to reserve it, elaborate on it, consciously or unconsciously also, as something to take into account when one reflects on real and concrete problems in particular cases".<sup>34</sup> Vaz Ferreira associates the fermentative anti-systematic mode of thinking with human freedom and systematic thinking with intellectual coercion. The closed and rationalistic system, epitomized by dogmatic positivism, is his equivalent of Korn's "necessity" and Vasconcelos's "entropy". Systematization of the ill-defined aspects of human experience is a kind of entropic tendency of the mind. Those phases of experience that evince stable patterns should be submitted to scientific analysis, but it is a mistake and a restriction on human freedom to seek metaphysical certainty about the very phases of experience

<sup>32</sup> ORIBE, Emilio, "Alejandro Korn", in *Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Estudios sobre Alejandro Korn*, 101.

<sup>33</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, "Lógica Viva", 94.

<sup>34</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, Carlos, "Falacios Verbo-Ideológicos", in Vaz Ferreira, *Estudios Filosóficos*, 160.

that are vaguest and most ill-defined. Vaz Ferreira develops a "living logic" or "psycho-logic" similar to Vasconcelos's "organic logic" to counteract the tendency towards "false systematization". He identifies paralogsms, such as false opposition and reification, that freeze thought into static patterns, and argues that the final judgment on questions of cognitive validity is hyperlogical and personal. "Hyper-logical good sense" is "a type of *logical instinct* that above all in questions of grade (of certainty) . . . intervenes after or along with reasoning to balance opposed arguments and to maintain constantly the interplay of multiple ideas, thereby impeding any of them from predominating illegitimately and carrying us to false systematization."<sup>35</sup> This process supervenes over the careful logical consideration of issues and, like Vasconcelos's coordinative thinking, is a supplement to, not a replacement for, logical analysis. Parallel to hyper-logical good sense in the cognitive realm is the attainment of moral "spirit" in the sphere of ethics. Vaz Ferreira argues in "Moral Para Intelectuales" that moral problems are too complex to be solved by any rationalistic system and that, therefore, after carefully reflecting upon the particular situation, one should act in accord with one's moral sense: ". . .the important thing is not to arrive at a school, but at a *state of spirit*".<sup>36</sup> Thus, in his concern for freedom Vaz Ferreira anticipates situational ethics. Throughout his description of experience he emphasizes the significance of the concrete human being with his untransferable hyper-logical good sense and moral spirit in opposing the determinations of impersonal and transferable systems, whether they be social codes or metaphysical speculations. His skepticism allows him to avoid any of the dogmatic tendencies in Korn and Vasconcelos, and reveals the structure of Latin American dualism without the distortions of ontological or metaphysical over-beliefs.

In his essay "¿Cuál es el Signo Moral de la Inquietud Humana?" Vaz Ferreira develops the philosophy of life implicit in his version of super-positivism. He speaks to those who live "without anaesthesia", those who have not been able to obtain religious security. These people, similar to the "hopeless" in Vasconcelos's thought, undertake the most heroic adventure of all: living without faith, but with a resolute commitment to affirm and attain ideals. Vaz Ferreira calls this philosophy of life "superquixotism" and describes it as a struggle for plenitude, similar to Vasconcelos's struggle to comprehend the whole and Korn's battle to attain the plurality of human values, economic and spiritual, grounded in creative liberty. Superquixotism involves a rejec-

<sup>35</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, Carlos, "Un Libro Futuro", in Vaz Ferreira, *Estudios Filosóficos*, 197.

<sup>36</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, Carlos, "Moral para Intelectuales", in Vaz Ferreira, *Estudios Filosóficos*, 79.

tion of any single ideal or value theory, because this would bind life to a system, and an effort to appreciate a multitude of diverse ideals, some contradictory. In Vaz Ferreira's life "without anaesthesia" the person must not only do without religious faith, but must also realize that none of the ideals to which he is committed will ever be fully attained. Yet Vaz Ferreira finds no cause for despair in this conclusion, but, instead, reason for a certain joy that there are people who, while they do not have any particular moral sentiment developed to perfection, have all the moral sentiments in some degree.<sup>37</sup> The hero of Vaz Ferreira's morality is not the single-minded world-historical individual, but the "obscure Christ" who attempts to realize a diversity of ideals in his life and who resists the temptation to systematize his existence and the lives of others. As in the thought of Korn, the modest virtue of intellectual probity is the basis for a free human life. As in Vasconcelos's work, human existence is not defined by the response to Nothingness or the absurd, but by the challenge to add value to experience. In Vaz Ferreira's thought this challenge is all the more sharply defined, because it is a challenge to engage the mechanistic aspects of one's own thought and the social expressions of mechanism, rather than to engage physical nature.

#### CONCLUSION

In *Proceso Intelectual del Uruguay* Alberto Zum Felde levels a criticism at Vaz Ferreira that could just as well be directed at the other thinkers of the Latin American golden age: "Those who, as Vaz Ferreira, wished to oppose the absolute dominance of Spencerian positivism ... in the name of a complete freedom of critical judgment and by virtue of a logical empiricism opposed to all systems, ... fell fatally into a passive eclecticism that moved naked and lean among the logical equations of the professor".<sup>38</sup> The preceding discussion should have been sufficient to show that the philosophies of the initiators evince a basic structure and provide a vital alternative to other contemporary philosophies of life. Far from being "passive eclectisms", the philosophies of the golden age are well-articulated responses to positivism that are as relevant to contemporary thought as they were in Latin American thought fifty or more years ago. Today, human beings, particularly in the United States, confront similar problems to those faced by the initiators of the golden age.

<sup>37</sup> VAZ FERREIRA, Carlos, "¿Cuál es el Signo Moral de la Inquietud Humana?", in Vaz Ferreira, *Estudios Filosóficos*, 274.

<sup>38</sup> ZUM FELDE, *Proceso Intelectual del Uruguay*, 203.

The dominant mode of thought in the United States, particularly in the social sciences, psychology and administration is the behavioristic or functionalist variety of positivism. North Americans who have been educated in the social or psychological sciences, or in analytical philosophy, and who find the behavioristic and functionalist approaches confining, have much to learn from writers such as Vaz Ferreira, Vasconcelos and Korn, who attempted to enrich positivism at the same time that they preserved its contributions. Up until the present, reactions against contemporary positivism have taken the forms of a return to phenomenology or Marxism, or of a commitment to existentialism. Leaving aside phenomenology or Marxism, which are substitutes for positivism rather than developments out of it, and which do not directly address the philosophy of life and conduct, the major alternative to the empirical dualism of Latin American thought is existentialism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the contemporary West existentialism stands alone as the only philosophy of life that has gained wide currency. Yet existentialism does not respond fully to the projects of those questioning contemporary positivism, primarily because it was not devised to be relevant to these projects. The philosophies of creative liberty, dualism and struggle of the Latin American initiators do respond to the projects of humanistic social scientists and others resisting behaviorism and behavioral engineering.

The basic structure of the philosophies of the Latin American initiators is an experiential dualism overlaid on an expanded empiricism that embraces the measurable and regularized experiences amenable to natural science methods, as well as the processes of creative liberty, coordination of wholes and fermentative thinking that escape experimental and logical analysis. For Korn, the basic dualism was the split between subject and object, reducible to the interplay between the processes of creative liberty and mechanical necessity. For Vasconcelos, the basic dualism was the split between the tendency towards entropy and the impulse to coordinate heterogeneous experiences into wholes. In the realm of thought Korn's dualism was mirrored in the polarity between axiology and science, while Vasconcelos's dualism was reflected in the polarity between constructive and reductive philosophies. Vaz Ferreira, who developed neither an ontology of experience nor a metaphysic, set up a dualism between fermentative and systematic thinking. In each case the dualisms pitted creative freedom and personal untransferable experience against determined and impersonal homogeneous experience. With regard to philosophy of life, each thinker both described and prescribed a perpetual struggle to expand the area of freedom and personality — with freedom and personality often equated with one another — against necessity, entropy and systematization.

Dualism, even when interpreted empirically, is an unstable position that often masks a covert monism. Neither Korn, Vasconcelos, nor Vaz Ferreira was willing to step outside of experience to bridge the rifts he had discovered or created. Korn made a virtue of his "intellectual probity". Vasconcelos mocked philosophers who analyzed concrete wholes into their components and then reconstituted these wholes by appealing to abstract concepts with no experiential referents. Vaz Ferreira praised living "without anaesthesia". Given this reluctance to engage in traditional metaphysical speculation, the three thinkers bridged their dualisms by humanizing and idealizing positivism. Each one made science relative to a wider human experience, and argued that an affirmation of freedom is a presupposition for affirming all other values, including those of science. Yet the Latin American initiators did not adopt absolute idealism. They did not argue that physical experience is a product of will. Rather, they were painfully aware that necessity, entropy and systematization are irreducible components of human experience that cannot be explained away by an appeal to the plan of an absolute mind, but can only be humanized through struggle or embraced through surrender. The humanization of experience meant for these thinkers resolutely maintaining their own freedom of thought, encouraging the freedom of others and creating new objects of culture. Only through such action, which ultimately depended on the free commitment of the individual person, could the mechanistic phases of experience be redeemed for the free person. An undercurrent of pessimism runs through the works of these philosophers, balancing their general optimism about human possibility. Positivism taught Korn that necessity could overwhelm liberty, Vasconcelos that the drift towards entropy might prove overpowering, Vaz Ferreira that systematization was a constant temptation for the mind. They recognized that human experience is equivocal, that freedom is won through a struggle that many people might choose not to undertake. Yet their skepticism and "intellectual probity" prevented them from resorting to the existentialist vocabulary of "authentic existence" and "bad faith". Human beings could be encouraged to be free. They could not be told that they *were* free, regardless of what they thought. The Latin American philosophers of the golden age were not prophets calling their people back to the true path, but renewers, opening up fresh possibilities. Rather than exhorting people to recognize the absurdity of their existence, the problem of Nothingness or their basic anxiety, the initiators attempted to teach people to humanize a universe that science had told them was indifferent to their ideals. The free person confronted scientifically determined experiences (necessity, entropy, systematization), not ontological, metaphysical or "existential"

predicaments. Olarte notes that for Korn "the category of anguish in non-transcendent".<sup>39</sup>

The empirical dualism of Latin American thought can be interpreted usefully as a super-positivism that adds new dimensions to scientific positivism. In opposition to the monism of scientific law and the homogeneity of analytic thought, it sets up the dualistic interplay between freedom and mechanism, and affirms the heterogeneity of creative liberty, fermentative thought, coordinative activity. It makes additions to a narrow system of thought and, thus, provides opportunities for human activity. Contemporary existentialism works in an opposite direction. It is essentially a subtraction from absolute idealism, a critical idealism. It enjoins the human being to confront all of the contradictions, alienations and frailties of his existence without hope that these are resolved or redeemed in the absolute mind. The existentialist is condemned to freedom in a world without God. The empirical dualist is invited to see his possibilities for freedom within experience and then encouraged to struggle to expand them. Those falling from idealism live in the shadow of their lost faith. Those emerging out of positivism did not have a faith that the universe was responsive to their deepest hopes, so they are exhilarated to discover a new freedom. Existentialists are concerned that human beings learn to make choices for themselves without dependence on absolute codes. Empirical dualists are concerned that human beings recognize their power to create, to think freely, to coordinate their experience. Empirical dualists do, of course, defend freedom of choice, just as existentialists often encourage creative freedom. However, empirical dualism idealizes positivism, while existentialism materializes idealism. Thus, while these philosophies are very similar in some respects, the problems to which they respond and the conduct of life that they recommend are radically different.

The empirical dualism developed by Latin American philosophers of the golden age is a vital alternative to existentialism. It should be particularly interesting to those who are confronting contemporary positivism, because it was developed as a revision of positivism, rather than as a substitute for it. Empirical dualism is strictly within the tradition of empiricism. Its dialectic is experiential, not metaphysical or ontological. Rather than authenticity, it recommends intellectual probity and the humanization of experience. It is a rationally defensible philosophy of life — *filosofía sin más*.

<sup>39</sup> OLARTE, "Alejandro Korn ante el Problema de la Metafísica", 95.