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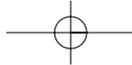
⇒ The role of eclecticism in the introduction of modern philosophy in eighteenth century New Spain

Abstract: The idea that there is a straightforward causal connection between the expulsion of the Jesuits and the beginning of a real Enlightenment in Iberian America—that the absence of the Jesuits from New Spain after 1767 might have allowed a stronger influence of Enlightenment ideas that they did not accept, such as liberalism—needs to be reconsidered. This article aims to show continuities between the Mexican Jesuit generation of 1750 and the generation of Mexican scholars who replaced them in the chairs of philosophy and physics, and occupied prominent positions in New Spain’s academic life after 1767. It deals especially with Juan Benito Díaz de Gamarra y Dávalos, an author who is usually associated with the Mexican Enlightenment and understood as opposed to the Jesuits, condemned for their traditionalism and medievalism. I argue that the process of introducing modern philosophy in New Spain started with the 1750’s Mexican Jesuit generation and was followed by a second generation—represented mainly by Gamarra and Alzate—after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1767.

Keywords: Juan Benito Díaz de Gamarra y Dávalos; Eclecticism; Jesuits; New Spain; Eighteenth Century.

The idea that there is a straightforward causal connection between the expulsion of the Jesuits and the beginning of a real Enlightenment in Iberian America—that the absence of the Jesuits from New Spain after 1767 might have allowed a stronger influence of Enlightenment ideas that they did not accept, such as liberalism—needs to be reconsidered. Their expulsion may have slowed down the reception of some advanced modern and scientific European ideas, since, up to this point, the Jesuits had been those who were most in touch with modern ideas, even if they pursued their own distinctive ways of being modern. The Jesuits, who had received extensive privileges overseas for the very purpose of bolstering the empire’s moral and religious base, were outstandingly versed in modernism. They were expelled in 1767 less for their reactionary perversity than for their shrewd, disciplined commercial activities and their faith-defying “proba-

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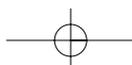
bilistic” dialectics. But, although the Jesuit influence was evident in their openness to democratic ideas coming from Rousseau, in great measure due to Francisco Suárez and Juan de Mariana, they rejected the main Enlightenment contributions that disassociated democracy from a Christian king (Morse 1988: 56).

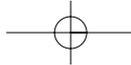
This article aims to show continuities between the Mexican Jesuit generation of 1750 and the generation of Mexican scholars who replaced them in the chairs of philosophy and physics, and occupied prominent positions in New Spain’s academic life after 1767. It will deal especially with Juan Benito Díaz de Gamarra y Dávalos, who is usually associated with the Mexican Enlightenment, understood as opposed to the Jesuits, condemned for their traditionalism and medievalism. I argue that the process of introducing modern philosophy in New Spain started with the 1750’s Mexican Jesuit generation and was followed by a second generation—represented mainly by Gamarra and Alzate—after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1767. The 1750’s Mexican Jesuit generation was responsible for spreading modern science and philosophy in New Spain before their expulsion, and influenced the ways Enlightenment ideas were absorbed by their former students after 1767 and by some exiled Jesuits in Italy. On both sides of the Atlantic, eclecticism was the methodology allowing Catholic Enlightenment authors to assimilate some new ideas while at the same time criticize what they considered the excessive rationalism of the century of lights.

Without diminishing the importance and originality of Gamarra, Alzate, and others who replaced the Ignatians in Mexican academic life, the importance of the Jesuits in the process of introducing modern philosophy in New Spain cannot be overlooked. Indeed, their works indicate that there is more continuity than discontinuity between these two generations of intellectuals: their common intellectual attitude was expressed in their philosophical choice of eclecticism, understood as a harmonization of ancient and modern authors, as well as the selection and conciliation of several doctrines, taking the best from each. This device is found in the work of Clavijero—considered the most representative Mexican Jesuit of his generation, before and after exile—and in that of Gamarra and his generation.

A brief history of the theme will help to clarify the perspective here. Until the 1940’s, the introduction of modern philosophy in New Spain was almost indisputably attributed to the work of Juan Benito Díaz de Gamarra y Dávalos (1745-1783), a Creole Mexican Oratorian priest from Zamora. Gamarra was sent to Spain and Italy in 1767—the same year the Jesuits were being expelled from Mexico—with “Power of Attorney” (*procurador*) of his order and with plans for higher studies. He received his doctorate in Canon Law at the University of Pisa, in 1770, and returned to New Spain well versed in modern philosophy and with a rich library of modern authors. There he dedicated the remainder of his life to the instruction of Mexican youths in philosophy at San Miguel, El Grande, and wrote *Elementa recentioris philosophia* in 1774, a two-volume compendium for beginners, and his most famous work. Written in Latin, it was translated to Spanish by Bernabé Navarro as *Elementos de filosofía moderna*. Gamarra also wrote, in 1776, *Academias filosóficas* and *Errores del entendimiento humano*, published in Puebla; *Máximas de educación* (Mexico, 1780); *Reflexiones críticas sobre las historias escojidas del Antiguo Testamento* (1781). He left some other manuscripts that are preserved in the National Library of Mexico and by private collectors.

In 1948, Bernabé Navarro published a pioneer study on the introduction of modern philosophy in Mexico. He pointed out that, rather than being responsible for the spread

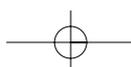


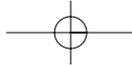


of modern philosophy in New Spain, Gamarra was, in fact, continuing the path inaugurated by an important generation of Jesuits who were teaching at the Jesuit colleges from 1750 until their expulsion in 1767. In doing so, Navarro broke with a traditional view of the theme initiated by Valverde Téllez, a great librarian and researcher of Mexican philosophy, and followed Samuel Ramos (1943) and Victoria Junco (1944). In his support, Navarro quotes the work of Gabriel Méndez Plancarte (1941) and the investigations of Pérez Marchand (1945), which had already had a role in modifying the overall picture. Navarro's intention was not to diminish the importance of the publication of Gamarra's *Elementos de filosofía moderna* in 1774 or that of other writings that followed it. Although emphasizing the pioneering role of the Jesuits in introducing modern philosophy in New Spain, Navarro considers Gamarra "the first great authentically Mexican philosopher, attuned with a new rationality that was beginning to be built" (Navarro 1983: 23). The Oratorian would also be an initiator, in the New World, of the tradition of going to Europe in order to improve one's education and coming back to the motherland to share it with his compatriots.

The translator of *Elementos de filosofía moderna* considers it a remarkable work in the field of Scholastic studies as well as in that of modern studies. It is the first Mexican work that changes radically the internal structure and way of exposing philosophical thought. Because of his advanced ideas, many considered him a Cartesian, but the book shows clearly that he was still also very Scholastic in important aspects. He called himself *eclectic*, although closer to modern ideas than to the traditional ones. This is something worth noting, because even if eclecticism had been part of Christianity since its assimilation of pagan ancient philosophy, in the third century, and was pursued by the Jesuits since the sixteenth century—becoming stronger and more evident during the seventeenth century—the word was not then used. Juan Maneiro, biographer of the eclectic Jesuit generation of 1750, does not use the term, although he admires the presence of eclecticism in the writings of this generation way before their expatriation from Mexico.

Navarro diagnoses a significant Enlightenment influence in Gamarra's *Errores del entendimiento humano* (*Errors of Human Understanding*), originally written in Spanish in 1776 and published in 1781, where he sets out a popular and useful philosophy. The same appears in the satire entitled *Memorial ajustado* (*Adjusted Memorial*), written with mortal irony and with an incisive criticism of the peripatetic in 1790. Charles E. Ronan, author of one of the best studies of Clavijero, agrees with Navarro on the role of Gamarra in the introduction of modern thought in Mexico in 1774 (Ronan 1977: 20). But, he argues that Bernabé Navarro's research clearly showed that the Jesuits had anticipated Gamarra by at least 15 years (Navarro 1983: 41). According to Ronan, Gamarra, although oriented by Scholasticism, was much more involved with modern philosophy than the Jesuits. But this was due to his intimacy, his familiarity with authors such as Descartes since the days he was a student of the Jesuits, as was his assimilation of authors such as Leibniz and Christian Wolff during the second half of the eighteenth century. Among the Scholastic theses that Gamarra questions or does not believe are the concepts of substance and form. The Scholastic method is dismissed and its imperfections pointed out: empty words and dogmatism. Only modern science, based on observation and experimentation, would be capable, in his view, of offering a real knowledge of nature.





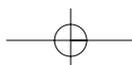
Eclecticism and the Catholic Iberian American Enlightenment

What is fascinating in reading the Jesuit Generation of 1750, and the philosophers who replaced them in the academic life of New Spain after 1767, as far as modern philosophy and science are concerned, are the different eclectic constructions that resulted from their attempt to incorporate aspects of the new ideas into the traditional Thomistic framework. The Catholic Iberian American Enlightenment brings up a singular coexistence of Catholicism, Enlightenment, and modernity in eighteenth-century New Spain. The main development in this field seems to have been a complex interaction between religion, science and politics in the process of constructing a Creole cultural identity in the eighteenth century, in the “holy war” that characterizes the beginning of the process of independence in Mexico, and in its repercussions during the first half of the nineteenth century (Lafaye 1974; Pagden 1994). This combination could be considered part of Iberian intellectual life from the sixteenth century onwards, and is to be found mainly in the eighteenth-century Jesuit writings (Domingues 1996).

The Jesuit influence, already strong in the seventeenth century, grew significantly during the eighteenth century, despite the disagreements between the Society of Jesus and the Bourbon dynasty. The so-called Bourbon Reforms, while intending to “modernize” Spain and its relation with its colonies, found strong opposition in the members of the Society of Jesus. While accused in Spain of loyalty to the Pope, rather than to the king, in New Spain the Jesuits joined the Creole elite in their resistance to the royal attempt to change their status from kingdom (vice-reinado) to colony. They were especially active in re-interpreting the demands of Creoles, Mestizos, and Indians, in their promotion of the myth of the virgin of Guadalupe, followed by the Aztec myth of Quetzalcóatl. In terms of new ideas coming from Europe, the Jesuits were open-minded, constantly trying to combine these new ideas with Thomistic philosophy and theology.

The combination of tradition and modernity in Jesuit thought has in fact characterized the Order since its formation, in the middle of the sixteenth century, until the present day (O’Malley 1993). And the eclectic and syncretic approach that shaped their intellectual and spiritual lives seemed to have had an even stronger influence on the colonial Hispanic world than in Spain. In New Spain, even more than in the motherland, they played a very important spiritual and political role. Their spiritual, intellectual, and political influence lasted longer than their physical presence in the New World, as demonstrated by the riots of Indians across the continent asking for their return, as well as by the strong eclecticism that gave shape to Mexican intellectual and political life in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The expulsion of the Jesuits from the Portuguese realm, in 1759, and from the Spanish, in 1767, took place precisely when the clouds of misoneism were lifting. But, instead of ending their influence in New Spain, it gave birth to the myth of the “Golden Age of the Jesuits” (Lafaye 1974: 104). Eighteenth-century Mexico presents itself as a picture of triumphant advanced Creole society based on a proud consciousness of New Spain’s wealth, of the burgeoning of cities, of a real or supposed intellectual supremacy, and on a charismatic feeling of being the chosen people (Paz 1988; Lafaye 1974). The question I want to pose is how this philosophical option developed when faced with the ramifications of the seventeenth-century revolutions in philosophy and science, as well as Enlightenment ideas during the eighteenth century. For, if seventeenth-century philo-





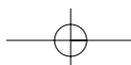
sophical modernity weakened Scholastic philosophy, the Enlightenment was, in principle, against religion. How could the Society of Jesus—which had been successful in finding eclectic solutions that enabled not only the survival of the Catholic faith, but even important aspects of its associated philosophy, Aristotelian Thomism, in the Baroque age—survive an attack on the basis of religion itself?

A fundamental thing one has to bear in mind is that by the time the Enlightenment reached Iberia, Spain and Portugal had become intellectual consumers. Their attempt to harmonize the Scholastic tradition and the new rationalism led to their coexistence. This eclectic solution is evident in the writings of authors as different as Feijóo, the Jesuits, and Campomanes. This prompts the question whether the Bourbon century does in fact represent sharp discontinuity, or whether it was a time of merely superficial modernization. Did the Bourbon Enlightenment refine the methods and purposes of the state in setting a technocratic example for the next two centuries, or did it merely modernize the Scholastic rationale for absolutism? In both cases, the natural obstacles to a unified conceptualization gave Enlightenment thought the appearance of a mosaic, not a system. In the Americas, a prevalent Creole position combined deep religious piety, scientific curiosity, the moral rigor of Jansenism, and Rousseauian republicanism, while avoiding the adoption of a new secularized outlook. This “uncertain principle” seems to have survived the wars of independence, emerging with fresh inspirations and an understandable political emphasis (Morse 1988: 105).

The first Spanish thinkers who defended Enlightenment ideas—Feijóo, Verney—made use of an eclectic methodology. The reformers associated with Enlightenment Despotism also attempted to keep abreast of Enlightenment ideas, without harming the Catholic Church or the Scholastic tradition. A good example of a very complex eclectic construction can be found in the Count of Campomanes, who tried to combine political and economic, modern and Enlightenment ideas with the Catholic tradition, while submitting the Church to the State. His work illustrates how the eclectic solution, characteristic of the Jesuits, became symptomatic of Iberian thought, found even among some important enemies of the Jesuits, like Campomanes and Jovellanos. But, if eclecticism was indeed the rule in the Iberian world, its effects vary radically. Just as Las Casas and Sepúlveda had used Aristotle for opposite ends, the eighteenth-century Jesuits and the defenders of enlightened despotism did something similar with Christianity and Enlightenment ideas: they mixed them in such a way as to defend opposing political/religious solutions for Iberia and its colonies.

This is the basis for what authors such as Mario Góngora call “Catholic Enlightenment”, or more precisely, a “Catholic Eclectic Enlightenment”. The Spanish Enlightenment could never accept, for example, the illuminist proposal for a new theory of the law of nature. This new philosophy was based on a different interpretation of natural law and was considered “obscene irreligiosity” (Góngora 1975). With its eclectic elements and Christian foundation, this Catholic Enlightenment operated largely within a Scholastic framework: it was “drawing more on the thought of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century than on the French and English philosophy of the Age of Reason” (Stoetzer 1979: 105).

While registering the decisive influence of Scholasticism in Iberian America between 1760 and 1840, Mario Góngora and Richard Morse noted that Enlightenment ideas were less critically received, and therefore less digestible, in Spanish America than in Spain.





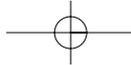
By the 1760s, the suspicion of novelty, the so-called *misoneism*, was yielding in leading Spanish American universities to qualified acceptance of reason and observation along with the canons of authority. Prudent eclecticism became the order of the day. Descartes and Gassendi were taught, but not to the exclusion of Aristotle. Political theories, in varying derivations, featuring natural law and the social contract, coexisted with officially sanctioned Gallicism. Moreover, the process of ideological formulation was restricted to a small elite that distinguished carefully between speculative views for private consumption and orthodox prescriptions for public circulation (Morse 1988: 104).

To assume that either or both versions of this Iberian Catholic Enlightenment were simply a *mélange* would not really help in understanding what was taking place there, because the means by which Catholicism and the Enlightenment were reconciled varied widely among groups, vested interests, and single thinkers. Here one has to consider at least three points: a) the conception of political freedom in Iberian tradition since the Middle Ages, and how this was transplanted to the new continent; b) the adaptation of neo-Thomism to the reality of the Iberian New World (New Spain) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; c) Iberian and Iberian American assimilation of modern science and philosophy and of Enlightenment ideas, emphasizing the eclectic and syncretic solution provided both by Iberians and Iberian Americans.

Eighteenth century Catholic defenders of eclecticism presented themselves as following in the footsteps of Clement of Alexandria, who inaugurated a Catholic eclecticism when, with some fears for the expansion of the Christian faith, it had to face the irruption of Neo-platonic philosophy and the spread of Hellenistic science and culture. It was by recourse to eclecticism that the Christians Paul, Justin, and Clement managed to transform Greek thought, incorporating it into Christianity. The eighteenth-century New Hispanic innovators, faced with the very suggestive and charming modern science, in contrast to an orthodox, rigid and decadent Scholastic thought—being disconnected from the true doctrine of Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas—pictured themselves as being in a similar position. And, facing a similar crisis, they adopted a similar “wise position”: take the truth wherever it is, assimilating it from different philosophers and philosophies (Navarro 1948: 214).

According to José Gaos, Christianity was, from its origins at the end of Antiquity, eclectic in the sense that it tried to absorb ancient (pagan) philosophy. The advantages of eclecticism for Christians were clear in that particular context: it liberated one from making a choice between the new and the old, the traditional and the modern. In using this device to balance the assimilation of new ideas, the authors would not forget or ignore other ideas and other positive values of humanity in the past, present or future (Gaos 1993: IX). The singularity of modern eclecticism, compared to the ancient one, is that in the ancient, the ingredient to be assimilated was pagan philosophy; in the modern, it was modern science and culture. Once again it looked as if, in order to survive, Christianity had to either resist science or surrender to it and renounce itself. Then, as in the third century, the solution came in the form of conciliation: this time between religious tradition and modern science. In the modern context, it was disastrous for Christianity to be associated with Aristotelianism, condemned to death by modern science. One possible solution was to establish a clear demarcation between Aristotle himself and the “vulgar peripatetic”. It was commonplace among the Iberian modern eclectics to maintain that, if alive, Aristotle would choose to be one.





These eclectic attitudes were viewed as assimilative of the positive values of tradition and modernity, impregnated by Greek, Latin and Christian humanism. But it remained the case that the basis for such Catholic eclecticism was the assumption that philosophies in general—including the modern one—were not considered on the same level as religion. The medieval hierarchy of knowledge was not dismantled. Religion was still viewed as separate and superior to philosophy. As Bernabé Navarro points out, “these religious men did not see clearly that the essential doctrinal problem was between modernity and scholastic philosophy, not between modernity and religion” (Navarro 1983: 223). It was philosophical modernity that was fundamentally opposed to Scholastic philosophy, whereas it was the Enlightenment that attacked religion itself.

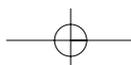
Such Catholic eclecticism is evident among those who describe themselves as “modern Scholastics”: Feijóo, Tosca, Losada and their disciples. But when one looks at them closely, it is important to take account of the change in the meaning of some decisive terms such as “ancient” and “modern” philosophy. In general, “ancient” philosophy was synonymous with scholastic or traditional philosophy, and “modern” philosophy meant that of Descartes, Bacon and Gassendi. By contrast, in the terminology of the modern Scholastics and many others, “modern philosophy” meant physics, while “ancient philosophy”, especially if referred to as the knowledge of nature, meant metaphysics. This is evident in the fact that very different philosophical courses taught by the Jesuits in New Spain until their expulsion were included in “Philosophy”, including particular sciences such as chemistry, astronomy, geography, etc. This way of proceeding implied that modern philosophy meant modern and experimental physics; and ancient philosophy meant ancient physics, logic, and metaphysics (Navarro 1983: 201).

The Jesuit Juan Luis Maneiro, biographer of the most important representatives of the Mexican Jesuit generation of 1750, talks about modern knowledge as the one that reveals the secret of nature, or that teaches a philosophy centered in physical facts, and other similar expressions. While describing the merits and progress of modern men, Maneiro wonders how those immense works managed to get power enough to extract from nature (Maneiro/Fabri 1989).

Another example of association between modern philosophy and physics can be found in the teaching of Clavijero and José Abad about atomism. This ancient philosophy was accepted as a physical reality, but not in its metaphysical implications. Eighteenth-century Catholic scholars very often referred to modern values and ideas as being, in reality, ancient ones. According to them, what the moderns were teaching was actually the *authentic* Greek science and philosophy, without Arab and Scholastic comments. What made the culture flourish, both in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, was not the introduction of new ideas and things, but the revival of Greek thought in the humanities and even more so in the sciences (Navarro 1983: 244).

The eclectic incorporation of modern philosophy in *Elements of Modern Philosophy*

Elementos de filosofía moderna was originally a course of Arts, written in Latin, that Gamarra taught his students at the Colegio de San Francisco de Sales, and then published with his own money in 1774. The mathematician Joaquim Velásquez de León admired the work, presenting it as being of great importance for the education of





youth. The same opinion was shared by the doctors of the Real y Pontificia Universidad de Mexico and by the scholars who taught philosophy and theology there, saying that this work contained the best selection of the doctrines of modern philosophers and scientists.

On the first page, Gamarra emphasizes the importance of a moderate philosophical attitude, associated by him with eclecticism: that is to say, using the procedures of right reason to extract truths from other ways of thinking with which the philosopher may be in contact, using his faculty of free will. While exercising this faculty, Gamarra opts for the peculiar way of thinking that the Greeks had named “eclectic” and the Latins “elective”. This way of reasoning is described by Gamarra as that which “searches for wisdom using right reason, directed by experience and observation, inner consciousness and reasoning”. The question is not who said something, but “if what was said is true, that is to say, in conformity with reason” (Díaz de Gamarra 1963: 165).

The appeal to moderation is present in all of his writings. Even his strong criticism of the decadent Scholasticism that had been taught in New Spain was accompanied by the recognition of the key role of Aristotle and Saint Thomas’ philosophy. His eclecticism was revolutionary, however, in the sense that it contributed to the Mexicans’ intellectual independence, an important step towards their political independence (Ramos 1943: 77). The revolutionary character attributed to Gamarra’s eclecticism relates to the possible influence of his *Elementa* on *Disertación sobre el verdadero método de estudiar teología escolástica* (*Dissertation on the true methodology to teach scholastic theology*), by Hidalgo, one of the heroes of Mexican independence.¹

One point that Gamarra makes clear in his *Elementos de filosofía moderna* is the intimate relationship between eclecticism and history of philosophy. In his address to the American youth, with which he opens his *Elementa*, besides announcing the importance of the study of history of philosophy, he offers a short version of it himself, in order to show that eclecticism is not a new approach. It was something that was first formulated by Clement of Alexandria in the third century, as he had learned from his Jesuit instructors. He also wants to convince his audience of the limitations of the systemic schools, which do not allow their members to search for the truth wherever it is, but only within their own approach.² In summary, in *Elementos de filosofía moderna*, 1774, Gamarra had dealt basically with the challenge of replacing the old scholastic way of teaching philosophy with the modern one, always emphasizing that modern philosophy, if understood properly, was not in conflict with religion. Quite the contrary, this could help one to understand better the secrets of nature drawn by God.

¹ According to Gabriel Méndez Plancarte (1941), even if Hidalgo does not mention Gamarra in his work, it seems impossible that, being a student at the Colegio de San Miguel el Grande, where Gamarra was teaching his *Elementa*, he was not aware of it. Gamarra’s spirit of freedom was inspirational to Hidalgo while writing his *Dissertaciones*, 25 years after the “Grito de Dolores”.

² As José Gaos well reminds us, eclecticism cannot exist without a history of philosophy, which consists of a plurality of philosophies. Without them, the selection proposed by the eclecticists is impossible (Gaos 1993: XXII-XXV).





The Eclectic Incorporation of Enlightenment ideas by Gamarra in *Errors of Human Understanding*

In *Errores del entendimiento humano*, written in Spanish and much more accessible to the public than *Elements*, one finds Gamarra in the grip of the Enlightenment, although still pursuing the same aim: presenting and defending eclectic philosophy. It had the style of eighteenth-century treatises approaching culture, education, health, fashion, and so on.

The story of *Errores del entendimiento humano* is quite interesting. The first edition was published under the pseudonym of Juan Felipe de Bendiaga,³ an anagram deciphered by Don Agustín Rivera y Sanromán one century later: Juan (Juan)-Felipe (Felipense)-Ben (Benito)-día (Díaz) ga (Gamarra) (Rivera y Sanromán 1885). In the prologue of the book, an anonymous “heir” of the author tells of the almost miraculous survival of the book. There is no signature, but the reader is guided to think that it was some relative, actually an heir of Gamarra (Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 47-48). Gamarra’s “heir” reports that the author of those thoughts found by him in isolated pages—“a curious and literate American”—died a few days ago, in the “account of a savior”. Not knowing precisely what to do with them, he decided to sell them to a *cohetero* (someone who buys things in order to start a fire with them). As soon as the *cohetero* paid for them, he picked up a page of it, started reading and saw the word *herejía* (heresy). He immediately, anxiously, went back to the seller asking what were those papers about, pointing to the dangerous word he had seen. Gamarra’s “heir” picked up the page and read the whole title: *Herejías del entendimiento humano*.

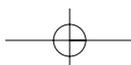
Knowing well that the word heresy means not just a voluntary and persistent error against some truth of our holy religion, but also an error, or notoriously false proposition in some science, I started, without hesitation, to read a piece of the first heresy, and soon confirmed my first judgment: the work had no heresy of the first kind, only of the second, which is the one very often used by the Latinos to refer to an error or false proposition in science.⁴

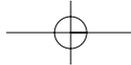
Then, he continued, he “clarified things to his *cohetero*”, and asked him to sell the whole thing back, “which he did with great pleasure”. Once putting the pages together the “heir” began translating them:

I was lucky enough that, even if some pages had some stains on them and the handwriting was hard to understand, it neither misses any syllables nor impedes a perfect understand-

³ The original title was: *Errores del entendimiento humano, con un apéndice. Dálos al público* D. Juan Felipe de Bendiaga. *Con las licencias necesarias. En la Püebbla de los Angeles, en la Oficina del real y Pontificio Seminario Palfoxiano. Año de 1781* (258 pages).

⁴ “Y sabiendo bien que esta palabra herejía, no sólo significa un error voluntario y pertinaz contra alguna verdad de nuestra santa religión, sino también un error, o una proposición notoriamente falsa en alguna ciencia, ya sin sospecha comencé a leer algo de la primera *herejía*, y luego me confirmé en el juicio que había antes formado, de que el papel no contenía herejías del primer modo, sino del segundo, en que lo usan frecuentemente los latinos para significar un error, o proposición falsa en alguna ciencia” (Anonymous preface in Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 47-48).





ding, although one needs to work hard in order to do so. This work, then, my readers, is a very loyal translation of that.⁵

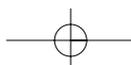
From this story, one wonders whether its author, whoever he is, could not possibly be the same one who invented the pseudonym. But, one must speculate much more as to whether one is reading the text in the way and in the order that Gamarra gave to it. The anonymous author of the prologue tells us that he had worked hard, and made many conjectures, to find out, “for sure, whether the little book’s author was the American”. His conclusion: as he could not research whoever wrote it anymore, so he offered to the public this “short book” as it was found (Anonymous preface in Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 48).

After this short introduction explaining why and how the book is still available to us, I am leaving aside the question of the authorship of this very interesting piece of work, as it is no longer amongst the preoccupations of the many scholars who have been studying it. In the beginning of the twentieth century, don Emeterio Valverde Téllez declared that, although he had heard of two other works—*Errores del entendimiento humano* and *Memorial ajustado*—by Gamarra, he knew just one, the *Compendio*, or *Elementos de filosofía moderna* (Valverde Téllez 1989). In a later book, however, Valverde dealt with *Errores del entendimiento humano*, arguing that the most interesting question in the Spanish production of Gamarra is to reaffirm his eclectic criteria, since his *Elementos*. Other scholars after him, such as Antonio Caso, José Gaos, and Bernabé Navarro, do not question the authorship of this book or of *Memorial ajustado*.

According to José Gaos, *Errores del entendimiento humano* was first published in Puebla in 1781, when the author was still alive (Gaos 1993: XXIX). Much more than just adopting eclectic devices, Gamarra becomes the defender of this methodological choice. He associated this moderate attitude in philosophy with that which does not challenge religion, and with the utilitarian one, which criticizes not just the Scholastic’s empty rhetoric but the absurdity of several useless habits in society as well. The title, theme and the content of the book reveal Gamarra’s affinity with his time. Aiming to make certain philosophical concepts accessible to ordinary people, besides writing the book in Spanish, he is prompted to deal with several aspects of mankind’s life in his time, particularly the ones he considers an obstacle to development, from improvement of the standard of living to achieving the ideal that nature has signaled for men. Although a defender of reason, Gamarra is also a defender of faith, a combination unacceptable to the radical rationalists or empiricists: he wants to emphasize the role of experience in the production of knowledge showing the independence, but not contradiction, of those truths with those related to faith. According to him, the true philosopher can only admit, in natural sciences, what was not contradicted either by reason or experience. Then, free of any concern, “when not governed anymore by any sense of fatherhood” (“sin sentimiento de paternidad”), one should inquire about the truth, and propose modestly his opinions, as if they were a theorem of Euclid: “reprove what is ever contrary to the Catholic dogmas, to reason or experience, and stay always open to embrace the truth, as soon as it presents itself”.⁶

⁵ “Tuve la fortuna de que, aunque estaban manchadas y muy mala letra, no les faltaba sílaba, ni dejaban de entenderse perfectamente, aunque a costa de mucho trabajo. Esta obra, pues, lector mío, es un fiel traslado de aquélla” (Anonymous preface in Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 47-48).

⁶ “La reprueba, si halla alguna vez que es contraria a los dogmas católicos, a la razón o a la experiencia, y está siempre pronto a abrazar la verdad, luego que se le presente” (Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 71).





Errors of Human Understanding is divided into three main groups: errors related to health, errors related to human wisdom, and errors related to morality. While discussing the several subtopics of each of them, one can draw a very rich picture not just of the philosophical combinations, but also of more practical aspects of life: ways of nursing babies and bringing them up, of instructing youth, of behaving in academic life, while denouncing the hypocritical morality of New Spain of that time. This work is, without doubt, a satire of literary as well as other customs in both Spain and New Spain, especially aimed to discredit the “eruditos a la violeta” (fake intellectuals, the ones who know only useless things), considered “impostors and pedants” (90). Diverging from the useless knowledge of such “philosophers”, Gamarra is preoccupied with applying his propositions to the practice, to a proper use, to the usefulness of the things he is discussing. He was, according to Samuel Ramos (1943), the first thinker interested in applying philosophy to the interpretation of his country and to solving its problems as well. In this sense, it was a work of philosophy in the sense it was understood in the eighteenth century.

Agreeing with Ramos, I would say that this could be one aspect that brings him closer to the European contemporary Enlightenment than to his Jesuit predecessors or exiles. Like Enlightenment thinkers in general, Gamarra was trying to make rationalism and empiricism converge. On the other hand, the knowledge of *his* country present in the text shares the Creole’s identity and patriotism built by the Jesuits, which became stronger after the expulsion of the order from Mexico. That is to say, it is impossible to neglect the influence of the Jesuit Generation of 1750—Clavijero, Abad, Alegre—before and during their exile, not only in Gamarra’s philosophical choice, but also in his ideas about the identity and individuality of Mexico. Of course the Jesuits while still teaching in New Spain were not yet enlightened men, in the sense of incorporating eighteenth century ideas such as those of the Encyclopedists; but they were modern in the sense of being open to new ideas such as seventeenth century modern science and philosophy, although assimilated and taught within the Catholic framework. This attitude was fundamental for their openness towards eighteenth century ideas during exile, as well as for Gamarra’s education.

The title of the work—*Errors of Human Understanding*—certainly suggests Gamarra’s Enlightenment influence. This kind of approach had its first famous manifestation in Bacon’s doctrine of the idols (Gaos 1993: XXII). One can also wonder whether it could possibly be a kind of response or dialogue with Locke’s *Treatise of Human Understanding*. But, aside from the similarities of both titles, the Enlightenment philosopher who comes to mind more often while reading Gamarra’s text, from beginning to end, is Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau, as is well known, represents the branch inside the Enlightenment that is actually critical of reason, as were also Diderot and Voltaire. The exiled Jesuit Generation of 1750 also embraced him, to some extent. Other important critics of reason within the Enlightenment movement were Leibniz and Wolff, who had a strong influence over Clavijero. As a result, it is not entirely coincidental that the influences felt by Gamarra in New Spain, and Clavijero, in Italy, came from similar authors. Clavijero was under the influence, direct or indirect, of Wolff’s criticism of the extreme rationalism of the Enlightenment. In Gamarra, one can hear the eulogy of nature and criticism of the artificiality of life in society, especially among the nobility. Besides the possible indirect influence of Clavijero over Gamarra, the Oratorian had close relations with the



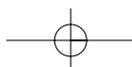
Cuban Presbyterian P. Parreño, the most important name of the innovation movement in Cuba. Parreño published the first treatise of philosophy in that island under the title *Philosophia electiva*, and it is considered the father of Cuban philosophy. The former publication of Gamarra was not unknown to him, but his *Philosophia electiva* was not published until 1944, in the first volume of *Biblioteca de autores cubanos* (Gaos 1993: XVIII).

It is possible to point out some similarities between *Errors of Human Understanding* and *Emile*, by Rousseau, in several subjects. In terms of authors quoted by both of them, there is Buffon, when dealing with feeding and dressing children. Besides Rousseau's influence that one can detect throughout Gamarra's text, there are some explicit quotations of his as well. The techniques used by Gamarra to deal with errors come from other ideological currents. The main one is that of writers of "maxims and characters", so peculiar to the eighteenth century: La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, and others (Gaos 1993: XXXVIII).

This is especially visible in the first and second parts: in the first, Gamarra writes about errors connected to health, emphasizing, like Rousseau, a necessary harmony between man and nature, which should assume the form of a liberal education. Although Gamarra makes several references to Ballaxserd's *Crianza de los niños*, he quotes Rousseau as well (Gaos 1993: XXVII-XVIII). In order to teach, Gamarra (and Rousseau) would say, it is necessary to make the subject available and interesting to the students, abandoning the old methods of repetition and memorization that, without really teaching anything, are responsible for the horror nursed by the majority against schools. But, without a doubt, Gamarra's religious precautions stopped him from marching alongside with Rousseau.

As far as the question of how to bring up children properly is concerned, Gamarra starts by taking Buffon as his source of authority in order to criticize societies that do not know how to bring them up, which was the case of his own (Gerbi: 1955). The habit of wrapping babies, for instance, is considered an unacceptable mistake, because it is against the nature of the babies, which is to move freely (Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 56). Another social habit severely criticized by Gamarra is the excessive use of carriages (coaches). He is not against this innovation, but against the bad use that has been made of it. Citing Rousseau, he argues that this is a necessary commodity that, unfortunately, has been turned into something disastrous to society. "The coaches seem to be made for the crippled (cojos), or putting it in a better form, he who is always in a coach becomes one (crippled)".⁷ The ladies who do not have a coach feel sad and envy of the ones who possess one. More seriously, the excessive use of carriages was responsible for the increasing weight of its ladies (61f.). Physical exercise, as well as contact with nature, is natural, and strongly recommended for human beings. The same reasoning, emphasizing the relation with nature and respect for its rules, orients his comments on errors related to feeding. Once again the truth is in the middle: one should eat enough to be full, should vary the kinds of food, but know how to combine them. The appetite has to be balanced with physical exercise (63-66). At the same time that, à la Rousseau, Davalos defends an

⁷ "El coche parece hecho para los cojos, o por mejor decir, quien anda siempre en coche muestra estarlo" (62).





intense relation with nature, he is also aware of the progress made in medicine, for instance, which causes him to defend the new doctors against the traditional midwife and other charlatans (95).

Gamarra continues his reasoning in the second section, devoted to errors related to human wisdom, which is the most interesting part of the book for my purpose here. The first mistake he points out is “to read things that are not written”: it seems strange to him that sometimes people are not able to read what is written in books, but it is certainly much more strange that one is able to read what is not written there (67). This mistake occurs very often among the antiquarians, but happens to literate men as well. The bad literate are as prejudicial, in terms of adulteration of the texts, as the antiquarians. This can have innumerable undesirable consequences when one reads into Hypocrates, for instance, something that is not there, adding to it one’s obscure comments. This is even more dangerous when it happens to a judge, who would read what is not written in the law, or a doctor reading what is not written in the aphorism. Having written a book, he recognizes that he is exposing himself to the same risk of having someone reading what is not there. “I truly hope that this little book does not end up in such hands. One who sees through green glasses sees everything green”.⁸ Because, being moved by envy and passion, some masters of the Latin language are able to find only obscurities there. Defending himself against any kind of accusation, Gamarra makes clear that it is not his intention “to offend anyone, much less the Catholic Church or its respected masters and professors” (68). His aim is simply to be useful to his homeland.

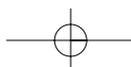
The second mistake is “to believe one knows what in fact is unknown”. This is, according to him, not just against nature but against religion as well. In this section the Rousseauian tone merges entirely with the religious one:

What a consolation for a religious and Christian spirit not to be able to fix the eyes on any part of nature without discovering in it clearly its Sovereign Author, without recognizing His admirable presence, which maintains and preserves his work, source of order and movement to all things, which gives order and movement to everything, and that shows itself in nature through brilliant verves of wisdom and love, worthy of moving all creatures and of fulfilling their hearts with recognition towards the Supreme Worker, whose glory is predicted by the heavens and whose works announce the firmament! What a prodigious extension of knowledge is necessary to build a physicist!⁹

In the passage above, Gamarra makes clear as well that science and religion are not in conflict with each other, a point he stresses in different parts of the text as being the great advantage of eclecticism over other philosophical options that see contradictions

⁸ “De verdad espero que este pequeño libro no termine en tales manos. Aquel que ve a través de cristales verdes lo ve todo verde” (67).

⁹ “¡Qué consuelo para un espíritu religioso y cristiano, no poder fijar la vista sobre parte alguna de la naturaleza, sin que descubra en ella visiblemente a su Soberano Autor, sin reconocer su admirable presencia, que conserva y perpetúa su trabajo, que da del orden y el movimiento a todas las cosas, que se muestra en la naturaleza toda por unos rasgos brillantes de sabiduría y amor, dignos de mover a toda criatura, y de llenar su corazón de conocimiento hacia el Trabajador Supremo, cuya gloria predicen los cielos, y cuyas obras anuncia el firmamento! Qué prodigiosa extensión del conocimiento se necesita para formar a un físico!” (69).





and incompatibilities where they do not exist. The mistake of believing one knows what one does not is well illustrated, according to Gamarra, by the complicated issue about the location of the soul. Recurring to the eclectic proceeding, he informs that the Peripatetic believes that the soul is in the entire body, and the Cartesians that it is in the pineal gland. There are others, more circumspect or more bound, who locate it generally in the brain, without many details. If he “was forced” to locate it, Gamarra would place it in the lungs, “which is not less necessary for life than these other parts” (69f.). But, in fact, he eclectically excuses himself from a definite word on the subject. For, according to him, all those philosophers who locate the soul in any site are, in fact, pretending to know what they actually do not. And, even worse, they try to make others believe in this by force or on the strength of their word: “Why is it not possible to live calmly without wishing to know what is so far inaccessible?”¹⁰ The wise man should content himself with the knowledge of all that is right, “either by Divine Revelation, or by infallible pronouncements of our Sacrosanct Religion” [...], followed by “everything that is right according to the physical evidence or by uncontested reasons: first with divine faith, second with human faith”.¹¹

One should not obstinately admit as correct and evident what is only probable; neither should one offer mathematical demonstration for what cannot be done in this way, without any other foundation than the teaching of our masters. “Blessed are the eclectic philosophers who, imitating the bees, search, from flower to flower, for the nectar of science!”¹² The advantages of eclecticism are related to the right use of reason, in the sense of not being afraid of asking difficult questions, to which one does not know the answer. The Cartesian, for instance, inquires on which law moves Descartes’ subtle matter. An eclectic, by contrast, would ask first whether such matter exists in the world. It is common, nowadays, he continues, to defend strongly and loudly that the water goes up in a plumb because nature is horrified facing a vacuum, when it is clearly demonstrated by reason that such fear does not exist (71).

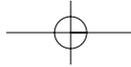
Another common error is “to affirm what is not known”. A consequence of the preceding error, this is less pernicious than the former. The problem, however, is the existence of a “class of people” who, even when they do not know something, teach it in an emphatic and decisive form (71f.). Connected to both are the mistakes “to study in order to not learn”, and “talk in order to make oneself incomprehensible”. The first occurs in two modes: “studying useful things with a bad method, or studying useless things”. Among the useful disciplines, one cannot exclude Latin, which is, without a doubt, useful. But the method that has been applied is entirely worthless. Gamarra’s recommendation is the book written by Oratorian colleague Luis Antonio Verney *Verdadeiro método de estudar* (*The true method for studying*). Verney used the pseudonym Barbadiño, but his work was, according to Gamarra, well known and published in Madrid (73).

¹⁰ “¿No se puede acaso vivir tranquilamente sin querer saber lo que hasta ahora no puede saberse? (70)”.

¹¹ “O por Divina Revelación, o por los otros testimonios infalibles de nuestra Religión Sacrosanta, que es todo que nos propone nuestra madre la Santa Iglesia, y después de esto, todo lo que es cierto por la física evidencia o por razones incontrastables; lo primero con la fe divina, en segundo lugar con la fe humana” (70).

¹² “Felices los filósofos eclécticos, que imitando a las abejas, buscan de flor en flor, el suave néctar de la ciencia” (71).





He does not offer examples of the disciplines considered useless for, according to him, “they are notorious to the sharp minds, and the ignorant ones would never be able to see them, even if posted in front of them”.¹³ Here Gamarra’s proximity to utilitarianism is very clear: “true wisdom consists of having knowledge of necessary and useful things”.¹⁴ The mistake of the obscurity of discourse happens, for instance, when a master encounters a disciple superior in talent, which is not very rare, or when a pedantic person is surrounded by ignorant people, or when someone has made an important discovery and does not want to share it with others (73-75).

The last mistake associated with human wisdom is “the desire to oppose nature”. Here the appeal to Rousseauian ideas is again very clear, although combined with some Scholastic reasoning. As everyone has his own inclinations, one should always be free to choose his profession. Parents should never try to make their children execute their own dreams and aspirations, because this is against nature (75). Returning to the theme of souls, now discussing the shape of them, Gamarra, basing himself on Plato, classifies them according to geometrical figures: each type of soul is appropriate to different kinds or shapes of body: “The soul of don Joaquim Velásquez must not occupy the status, place or profession of a shoemaker, neither could the latter be in the place of an excellent geometer and philosopher”.¹⁵ According to Gamarra, Joaquim Velásquez was a distinguished American, whose brain was devoted to mathematics, chemistry, and physics (75).

His main concern in the third part is with the search for the truth in all levels of life. The mistake of “not wishing to hear the truth” occurs frequently with those who guide themselves by only one philosophical system, the Cartesians, for instance, but not with the eclectics:

But systematic philosophers do not investigate the true cause of such phenomena or beauty in nature: they put all their effort into searching for all the ways to relate them with that principle that they adopted as right [...]. Gassendists attributed everything to the atoms: peripatetic, to the “occult qualities”, and so do the others.¹⁶

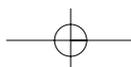
Only the eclectics study the principles of human sciences before choosing one single path. The problems identified by Gamarra in his contemporaries were, according to him, similar to those detected by Socrates and Plato in the Sophists: they discussed for the pleasure of it, never conceding any point. It seems to me that even if Gamarra is making a strong point in defense of eclecticism, it sounds strange that he criticizes the Sophists and defends Socrates and Plato when, in the history of philosophy, the Sophists were the ones against systematization and Plato the creator of a huge systematic system. Accord-

¹³ “Son notorias para las mentes agudas, y los ignorantes nunca podrían verlas, incluso si estuvieren fijadas delante de ellos” (73).

¹⁴ “La verdadera sabiduría consiste en conocer las cosas necesarias y útiles” (73).

¹⁵ “El alma de don Joaquín Velásquez no debe ocupar el estado, lugar o la profesión de un zapatero, ni tampoco podría el último estar en el lugar de un excelente geómetro y filósofo” (75).

¹⁶ “Pero los filósofos sistemáticos no averiguan cuál sea la verdadera causa de aquel tal fenómeno o maravilla de la naturaleza: sino que hacen todo esfuerzo y buscan todos los caminos para referirlo a aquel principio que ellos adoptaron como cierto [...] El gassendista todo lo atribuye a los átomos: el peripatético, a las *calidades ocultas*, y así de los demás” (77f.).





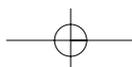
ing to Gamarra, the Sophists' dispute did not aim at discovering the truth, but simply at defeating the opponent. Feijóo, on the other hand, is truly in search of the truth with an open heart and mind (78). Dr. Gazola, who named his little book *El mundo engañado de los falsos médicos* (*The mistaken world of fake doctors*), wrote an important work on those who do not want to listen to the truth. Gamarra hoped that some noble American mind would write another, replacing doctor with intellectual (wise man), as Feijóo, who could have done it, did not (79). José Gaos considers *Errores del entendimiento humano* a specific repercussion of Feijóo's work. Gamarra is bringing to the Americas the style of *Teatro crítico* and *Cartas eruditas*, in lesser proportion, for sure, but no less sharp in its criticism of his society. At the same time, the account of mistakes and errors is the central concept of *Criticón* and, in general, of Spanish literature in Baroque times (Gaos 1993: XXVII).

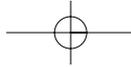
The mistake of "not wishing to tell the truth" is characteristic of liars who exist everywhere. What is more astonishing to Gamarra is to find them surrounded by sincere and erudite men who believe in all their lies (Díaz de Gamarra 1993: 86-89). It is equally mistaken behavior, Gamarra alerts the reader, "to not trust anybody" or "to trust everyone" (80-82). One should neither be suspicious of everyone nor trust everybody. Either to live in society or to escape from it, it is necessary to trust others "with those rules and precautions on which prudent people base themselves" (81). The references to the virtues of the eclectic position are clear: the truth is usually in the middle. This is why eclecticism is the best method to educate youth and to increase the prosperity of their motherland: because it is less susceptible "to desire position rather than responsibilities" ("querer los cargos y no las cargas") and more able to recognize the real wise men, who are very rare (86-89).

Gamarra's major concern in this part is with connecting the education of youth with the improvement of his homeland. Without dismissing the books written by the Europeans, from which he himself admits he has learned a lot, he devotes considerable energy to valorizing New Spanish scholars: and more, the personal contact between the authors and the audience. Because a dialogue between a mathematician, philosopher, critic, or physician with their audiences instructs one much better than their written work: "the books cannot respond to audiences' objections" (90).

As the Romans and the Jesuits did, Gamarra valorizes rhetoric as a source of great intellectual ability among youth. Gamarra demonstrates himself to be an optimist about the progress made by New Spain during the reign of Charles III, "a king who rewards largely new discoveries, protects agriculture and other useful arts"¹⁷ and then contributed to the expansion of knowledge about nature and industry. A good example is the famous Real Sociedad Vascongada de los Amigos del País (Royal Society Vascongada of Friends of the Country). In a few years it made much more progress than others in the most flourishing of foreign nations. But, it seems to me that what he is really trying to say is to suggest the foundation of an Academy of Science and Arts in New Spain: "How many great geniuses could be discovered in our America if there were here a Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts! But the voice of an unknown and retired philosopher seems too weak to

¹⁷ "Un rey que recompensa abundantemente los nuevos descubrimientos, protege la agricultura y otras artes útiles" (88).





incite such glorious enterprise”.¹⁸ For now, he recommends to those interested in science, and particularly to those interested in seeing this done in Spanish, to read the *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*, composed by the Real Academia Española.

The theme of the education of children and youths is, as already pointed out, connected to the praise of nature and the development of the country. The prudent solution to cultivate American spirit is to make physical and spiritual exercises parts of an education based upon recreation and repose in order to create in children the desire to learn. Then present to them good and curious books, and finally teach them the useful sciences. Youths must have their opportunity, and the old generations must recognize this instead of trying to make things hard for them.

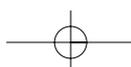
Gamarra closes his work by making a compliment to utilitarianism in the same eclectic way that he had opened it: there is no radical difference between useful and useless sciences. If one asks of several people which sciences are useful, one will hear different answers: for some they are those that help one to make money, to others, those that serve society immediately. The common men know that to win a petition is a useful thing, that to cure an infirmity is a useful thing, and then deduce that law and medicine are useful sciences, and they actually are; but the common men do not know about the intimate and delicate connection that exists among all sciences, neither do they know that it is the discovery of the truth that should be properly called useful science, because truths in any form are always useful to men.

In various disciplines, this usefulness is not evident, but certainly exists. Mathematics, and especially geometry, is the best example. The geometric spirit is the one that spreads over all other sciences and arts, improving and adorning them. This is the spirit that makes methodical and exact men: helps lawyers to compare facts and analyze their probabilities and the ones who work in manufactures to improve their technique. In sum, the most important discipline to be taught to the youth in order to introduce them to the useful sciences is geometry, no matter how much the old generations would complain about it (100).

When Galileo was observing the middle stars with his glasses, some jurists believed that their occupation was more serious, and their studies more useful than those of the famous astronomer: but the occupation of Galileo brought important rectifications in geography—preventing many ships from sinking—due to the method of longitudes. Harvey, while busy observing a piece of a rat in his microscope, was the object of ridicule for several people; and the microscope in the hands of Harvey discovered the circulation of blood, so far unknown.¹⁹

¹⁸ “¡Cuántos bellos ingenios se descubrirían en nuestra América, si hubiese en ella una Academia Real de Ciencias y Artes! Pero es muy débil la voz de un filósofo retirado y desconocido, para incitar los generosos ánimos de tan gloriosa empresa” (90).

¹⁹ “Cuando Galileo estaba observando con su anteojo las estrellas medicias, algunos juristas creerían tal vez tener en sus manos ocupaciones más serias, estudios más útiles, que los del famoso astrónomo: y sin embargo de esto, la ocupación de Galileo nos trajo la rectificación de la geografía, y ha libertado del naufragio muchísimos navíos con el método de las longitudes. Harveo, ocupado en observar su microscopio el mesenterio de una rana, dio tal vez que reír a muchos viejos por verlo absorto en una diversión pueril, y aquel microscopio en las manos de Harveo descubrió la circulación de la sangre, desconocida hasta entonces” (100).





And, if anyone wanted to denounce this little book because it brings some novelty instead of repeating the most common opinions, Gamarra can guarantee to all that “this is a book that contains nothing against our Sacred Religion, our Lovely Sovereign, his wise ministries or good customs”.²⁰

Conclusion

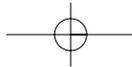
My aim has been to demonstrate that the involvement of the Jesuit Generation of 1750 with the European Enlightenment during their exile in Italy, and their former students in New Spain, had similarities due to the fact that from 1750 until 1767 when they were expelled, Jesuits such as Clavijero, Abad and Alegre were teaching in their courses modern science and philosophy within a Catholic framework. This educational work influenced the way the exiled Jesuits and their pupils who stayed in Mexico, such as Gamarra and Alzate, assimilated eighteenth century ideas, that is to say, combining them with Christianity. As I have tried to show, the result was not the same. But they shared some important options: eclectic methodology, the approximation with authors like Rousseau and Catholic Enlightenment philosophers like Wolff and Vico.

Clavijero’s writings, before and during exile, as well as those of other Jesuits and authors influenced by them drew upon eclectic formulations which were predominantly Scholastic, but in which one can detect, if not direct influence in terms of content, at least an attitude of sympathy toward the new, or “modern” spirit: new forms of investigation, learning and teaching methods, criticism of the criterion of authority, etc. In the period after the expulsion of the Society from New Spain in 1767, when they were living in Italy, there occurred another incorporation, equally eclectic, of the Enlightenment attitude, as well as of some of its ideas and methods. This process was in great part facilitated by the fact that Jesuits from so many different destinations had met each other in Enlightenment Italy. But, such an amazing scientific and humanistic movement of renovation—headed by the Mexican Jesuits—would probably not have happened there if it had not already started in New Spain with the same generation now away from their homeland: Clavijero, Abad, Alegre. In fact, this movement continued there with authors like Gamarra (1745-1783) and José Alzate (1738-1799), both of them having been influenced by the Jesuits in the process of introducing modern science and philosophy into New Spain. Although the eclectic constructions of Gamarra were closer to contemporary Enlightenment formulations than those of the Jesuits, it is important to reaffirm that they all made their philosophical choice in favor of a Catholic eclecticism.

In this sense, the differences between the Jesuits and their successors in pedagogical work in New Spain—among them Gamarra—can be understood better if one takes them as two Catholic assimilations of the Enlightenment (as we have seen happening between Jesuits and Spanish reformers, or even within the Order). This article questioned the thesis that affirms that what happened in the universities of New Spain after the expulsion

²⁰ “Este es un libro que no contiene nada contra nuestra Santa Religión, nuestro Amable Soberano, sus sabios ministros o las buenas costumbres” (101).



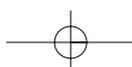
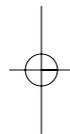
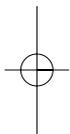


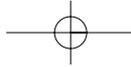
of the Jesuits was the real start of the Enlightenment in the New World. I do not wish to suggest that New Spain intellectual life was the same after the expulsion of the Jesuits, or that the Sons of Loyola remained, from Italy, the masters of their New Spain disciples. But we must dispense with the rigid dichotomy that is usually set up between the Jesuits and the reformers of the university and teaching in New Spain after their expulsion.

The three kinds of eclecticism so far diagnosed in the history of philosophical thought—the ancient, the modern, and the nineteenth-century French—each represent, at first glance, some kind of solution to the conflict between apparently irreconcilable philosophies. Eclectic philosophies emerge in vital historical situations, when the conflict among different aspects of culture seems insoluble unless it appeals to the “election” of one or another. At a second glance, they could become movements of renovation or even revolutionary movements. The second kind of eclecticism—the modern (or Aristotelian Scholastic) one—which has been our subject here, did renovate, in its own way, the culture of the countries where the Catholic Church was the strongest institution, making the introduction of modern science and philosophy possible. In some parts of the Spanish empire, such as New Spain, it was revolutionary as well, in the sense that it contributed to intellectual independence in relation to the past, which was a decisive step toward political independence. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the permanence of eclectic thought in Iberia and its American colonies is inseparable from the permanence of Christianity, which was profoundly eclectic from its beginnings.

It is curious that this second kind of eclecticism—or modern (Scholastic) eclecticism—has been much more marginalized in the histories of philosophy than the ancient or the nineteenth-century French one. While ancient eclecticism and nineteenth-century eclecticism figure in several manuals of history of philosophy, this is not the case with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century eclecticism. The most common explanation for its absence and/or marginality, which seems quite plausible, is that the history of philosophy written so far is, in general, not properly a history of philosophies, but a list of the “great creative philosophers”. And eclecticism cannot be, *stricto sensu*, creative, by its own nature (Gaos 1993: XXIV-XXV). This is why Gamarra is frequently presented as a broad spirit, but not equally original or coherent: his writings, like those of the Jesuits, miss the systemic view so valorized in the histories of philosophy, and so strongly criticized by them in order to defend the possibility of acting like bees, selecting the best from the flowers. Both are parts of the Catholic Enlightenment, which is to say, closer to authors from other European countries who were critical of the excess of rationalism of the Enlightenment: in other words, critics of the dichotomy of philosophy and science with religion. In the works of Gamarra and Clavijero, in New Spain or in Italy, there are several references to the names of colleagues in other countries such as Italy and Germany. They both mention an eclectic philosophy by Sturm, 1686, following a pioneer work by the Portuguese Issac Cardoso in 1673. The title of his work—*Philosophia libera*—is perhaps the first of this kind of modern eclectic or elective philosophy, that is to say, free from sectarianism (Gaos 1993: XVIII).

This fact may help us understand the difficulties for the Iberian and Iberian American countries in assimilating or surviving Western modernity without employing eclecticism, a device still used in the assimilation of Marxism in the twentieth century (one of its forms was Liberation Theology). In this sense, I shall conclude by saying that the eclectic Catholic tradition was renovated, rather than broken, by Gamarra, and that this



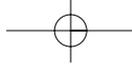


attitude had its roots in seventeenth-century eclecticism, wherein the Jesuits played an important role: eclecticism was the only possible option to ensure the same mode of existence, inherited from the middle Ages, of expanding toward unoccupied spaces while trying to evade changes brought by time.

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