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Philosophy and Pedagogy in Félix Varela, José de la Luz y Caballero, and Enrique José Varona

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The three best-known Cuban philosophers/pedagogues of the nineteenth century – Félix Varela y Morales (1788–1853), José de la Luz y Caballero (1800–1862), and Enrique José Varona y Pera (1849–1933) – offered a united front against those who taught and promoted late scholastic philosophy at the Royal and Pontifical University of St. Jerome of Havana (henceforth, University of Havana). The controversy between them and those who defended the teaching of scholasticism was primarily epistemological, related to how can we learn and know best: do we learn through formal deductive reasoning, including an appeal to the authority of tradition, or through our ordinary experiences independent of the authority of tradition? Since Varela, Luz, and Varona defended liberal and republican ideas, their arguments, while mainly philosophical and pedagogical, oftentimes seemed to challenge the class and racial interests supporting the tyrannical regime imposed by Spain on the island.

While there are significant differences among the three philosophers/pedagogues, there are also important agreements about the role and teaching of philosophy and science. Their anti-authoritarian pedagogy embodied their liberal and republican views of politics. As a result, they rejected despotism at home and abroad. On the one hand, they shared a didactic commitment to teaching modern philosophy and science. On the other hand, they adopted an *engagé* attitude as public intellectuals concerned with the challenges and ills affecting Cuban society. Such a display of civic duty became a trademark not only of Cuban intellectuals but also of their Latin American counterparts.

Despite his humble personality, Varela became a role model of a public intellectual. As an elected delegate to represent Cuba in the Spanish Cortes in 1821, he defended liberal projects favoring Cuba's autonomy, the recognition

of the independence of American colonies from Spain, and the abolition of slavery in Cuba. Regrettably, the Spanish Cortes were disbanded and Varela, fearing for his life, chose to seek political asylum in New York. Once in the United States, and disenchanted with Spain's despotic monarch, he moved to Philadelphia where, in 1824, he published the first three volumes of the newspaper *El Habanero: Papel Político, Científico y Literario*, discussing new scientific and literary developments but also promoting Cuba's independence. Back in New York, he continued publishing *El Habanero* and translated Thomas Jefferson's *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*, adding his own commentaries to elaborate on the text, showing his commitment to the values of American republicanism. Moreover, as vicar general for the Archdiocese of New York, Varela founded several journals, in which he engaged in defending religious toleration against the intolerance of the Protestant majority.

Luz displayed his talent as a public intellectual during the famous Polémica Filosófica de la Habana: 1838–1840 (henceforth, La Polémica), a series of public debates about how best to teach philosophy and science, while also arguing against Victor Cousin's modern conception of eclecticism. Luz publicly debated his conservative opponents by defending the inductive and explanatory method of teaching. He published most of his articles in the newspaper *Diario de la Habana*, while his opponents published most of theirs in the conservative newspaper *Noticioso y Lucero*, precursor to *El Diario de la Marina*, which represented the interests of the Spanish oligarchy. Like Luz, Varona was part of the *criollo* elite, but, unlike Luz, he was a well-known abolitionist. Despite first being a supporter of the more moderate and gradualist Partido Liberal Autonomista, he later became a paladin of Cuba's full and immediate independence from Spain. After the 1895 death of José Martí, who came to be known as the Apostle of Cuba, Varona became the editor of the newspaper *Patria*, founded by Martí to support Cuba's war of independence. Varona also founded the literary journal *Revista Cubana*. After the US intervention on the island, he was appointed Secretary of Public Education and implemented what is known as "El Plan Varona" to modernize Cuba's secondary and higher education. He later founded El Partido Conservador [the Conservative Party] and became vice president of the newly established Cuban Republic. While continuing to teach at the University of Havana, he became a supporter of the Cuban youth who opposed the dictatorship of President Gerardo Machado (1925–1933). Varona's impeccable honesty and moral integrity gained him the admiration of educated Cuban youth. And yet, even as these three philosophers had

great influence on Cuba's culture and education, they were unable to establish a philosophical legacy in the island.

Varela, Luz, and Varona, writing in successive historical moments, did succeed, however, in debunking the arguments of those who insisted on preserving the remnants of late scholasticism based on syllogistic logic, rote learning, and an appeal to tradition, especially to the authority of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. The triumvirate focused on the evidence found in people's ordinary experiences and the cogency of their ideas. By embracing Francis Bacon's modern method of induction, they hoped to acquire practical knowledge to improve Cuba's economic development. Varela and Luz argued against the infamous slave trade prevalent on the island. However, unlike Varela and Varona, who were abolitionists, Luz inherited a sugar mill and some enslaved people, even though in his will he left money to be used in buying their freedom. By the time Varona became a professor at the University of Havana in 1902, slavery, having been legally abolished in 1886, was no longer a prominent public issue. But the vicious and infamous cultural legacy of racism was, and remained in the twenty-first century, one of the evils affecting Cuban society.

The newly appointed liberal bishop of Havana, Juan José Días de Espada y Fernández de Landa (1756–1832), instructed Varela to implement profound educational reforms. Varela acknowledged as much when he wrote, "Tomé, pues, la escoba ... y empecé a barrer, determinado a no dejar ni el más mínimo polvo de escolasticismo, ni del inutilismo." [I grabbed the broom and started sweeping, determined to get rid of the last vestiges of scholasticism and futility] ("Carta" 241).[1] Before Espada's arrival to Havana from Spain, Bishop José de Hechavarría y Elguezúa (1725–1789), a native of Santiago de Cuba, helped to enact the 1769 statutes governing the newly founded Royal and Conciliar College and Seminary of San Carlos and San Ambrosio of Havana (henceforth, San Carlos Seminary). Some scholars argue that Bishop Hechavarría was no reformer. Amores Carredano contends that "[i]n no way one can conceive of the native-born bishop introducing new ideas or a new educational system in the island" (212). Despite such reservations, there is reason to believe that Bishop Hechavarría's initiative allowed for improving the teaching of modern philosophy and science at this institution.

Bishop Hechavarría supported the practical nature of these reforms by stating that their "intended design had been to establish a workshop to

1 All translations are my own.

prepare men who are truly useful to the Church and the State" (qtd. in Bachiller y Morales 294–295). Varela and Luz, who supported the teaching of modern philosophy and science as a way of improving nineteenth-century Cuban society, shared Bishop Hechavarría's commitment to educate useful men for church and state. Varona's view of education, however, differed from those of Varela and Luz. As an atheist and Secretary of Public Education under the US occupation in 1898, he obviated the role of the church, thereby completing the modern process of secularization of public education.

The statutes governing the San Carlos Seminary reflected the racial prejudices and religious intolerance present at the time. As established by Article 3, only descendants from old and ostensibly pure Christian blood could enroll as students in the seminary. The statute reads: "[T]he non-descendants of old Christians who are cleaned of any mixture of bad breed of Jewish or Moorish ancestry or recent converts to our holy Catholic faith" cannot study at the seminary. Also, Article 4 excludes "descendants of black, mulatos, or mestizos" (Bachiller y Morales 297). Still, since education at the seminary was free, not only Spaniards and members of the rich white *criollo* class were accepted to the seminary, but also those who were intelligent but poor, who could receive an elite education comparable to the one that the rich could have obtained by studying in European universities.

Inspired by Varela's and Luz's legacies, some of the graduates from the San Carlos Seminary became leaders of a newly emerging Cuban culture supporting a nationalist sense of *cubanidad*, or Cubanness, that ultimately led to the liberation of Cuba from Spain in 1898. Three prominent Cuban patriots who graduated from this institution were Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, often referred to as the "father" of the *patria* [homeland], the leader of the Ten Years War of Independence, and the president of Cuba's Republic in Arms during the war; Rafael María de Mendive, teacher and tutor of Martí; and Cirilo Villaverde, who wrote the classic and influential nineteenth-century Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés o La Loma del Angel* and who was a relentless supporter of Cuba's independence. Although Varona did not attend San Carlos Seminary, he was influenced by Varela's and Luz's liberal and republican ideas. As result, he briefly participated in the failed 1868–1878 Ten Years War against Spanish rule and was actively involved supporting the final war of independence (1895–1898).

Prior to Varela's teaching at the San Carlos Seminary, the priests José Agustín Caballero (1771–1835) and Juan Bernardo O'Gaván (1782–1838) initiated educational reforms, but with circumspection. Both Caballero and O'Gaván taught Varela at the seminary. Caballero, who published his

influential textbook *Philosophia electiva* in 1797, started teaching Cartesian philosophy without questioning the foundation of late scholastic philosophy. He taught logic and metaphysics, and O'Gaván taught physics and ethics at the seminary. The latter was appointed to the chair of philosophy, formerly occupied by Caballero, and, as J. M. Mestre states, "O'Gaván, who succeeded Caballero, instead taught empiricism" at the seminary (15).

In 1811 Bishop Espada appointed Varela to teach philosophy and natural sciences at the seminary, which he did until 1820, and encouraged him to reform the teaching of these disciplines in the light of modern European developments. Varela's teaching contrasted with late scholasticism, taught at the University of Havana. As a result, Varona argued that Varela was the reformer who brought about "la obra grandiosa de la transformación intellectual de un pueblo" [the great enterprise of transforming the intellectual landscape of a whole nation] (*Conferencias filosóficas* 19). As Varona writes, "Cuba pasó en un punto de las tinieblas de la escolástica ya caduca, á la plena luz de la filosofía moderna" [Cuba moved from the sterile practice of late scholasticism to the new and shining light of modern philosophy] (*Conferencias filosóficas* 19). He attributed such a monumental task solely to Varela. But, of course, the transformation of an educational system is a complex undertaking that no person can accomplish singlehandedly. Still, one can reasonably affirm that Varela, with the support of Bishop Espada, played a leading role in promoting and bringing about such a worthwhile transformation.

By embracing modern European philosophy and science, the triumvirate of Varela, Luz, and Varona rejected the conspicuous practice of appealing to the authority of the archaic *magister dixit*, or "the teacher has said", commonly practiced by those who taught scholastic philosophy. The defenders of such a questionable pedagogical approach pretended to solve philosophical problems or to reject the advancements of modern science based on a priori syllogistic reasoning. Hence, they often ignored or neglected empirical evidence that could undermine their Aristotelian and Thomistic conception of the universe.

The appeal to authority, or *argumentum ad verecundiam*, is a well-recognized fallacy whereby those who offer an argument try to defend it not by focusing on compelling evidence, but by bowing to the opinions of alleged experts, disregarding whether or how cogent the experts' opinions might be. Varela argued against this specious way of reasoning. He writes, "Yo no hablaré de la autoridad de los filósofos como Aristóteles, Cartesio y Newton, pues no hay nada más despreciable que decir que una cosa es

cierta porque ellos lo han afirmado" [I would rather not talk about the authority of philosophers, such as Aristotle, Descartes, and Newton, since there is nothing more unworthy than to say that a belief is true or certain because any of them might have said so] ("Lecciones" 179).

Following Varela's legacy, Luz states, "El espíritu de nuestra enseñanza ha sido hasta ahora hacernos sentir nuestra ignorancia, sin doblegar la rodilla ante el ídolo de la autoridad: ved ahí los dos primeros pasos para saber bien" [the spirit of our teaching up to now had been to make us aware of our ignorance without bending our knees before the idol of authority: these are the first two steps for sound learning] ("Elenco" 128). Moreover, Varona, in the spirit of Varela's and Luz's anti-authoritarian pedagogical tradition, maintains: "Enseñar es fecundar. No quiero ante mí, cerebros esponja ni cerebros piedra berroqueña; si no que embeban ideas, y las transformen." [To teach is to cultivate. I do not want before me brains resembling a sponge or brains as hard as granite, but rather brains that absorb ideas and transform them] (*Con el eslabón* 19). Evidently, for Varela, Luz, and Varona, a sound education is meant to be a truly transforming experience, liberating one from false beliefs and superstitions, especially from the dictates of questionable authorities.

Varela and Luz were people of faith. In Varela's case, he was first and foremost a committed Catholic priest who was ordained in 1811 for the Diocese of San Cristobal of Havana and shortly thereafter appointed by Bishop Espada to teach philosophy at the San Carlos Seminary. Luz, however, although he was influenced by his uncle and prelate José Agustín Caballero to follow his vocation in the priesthood, was never ordained and chose instead to study law, although he never practiced it. Instead He became a reformer of secondary education.

Unlike Varela and Luz, Varona was a self-proclaimed atheist and a moral skeptic. But his atheism and moral skepticism did not prevent him from using his philosophical acumen and public influence to argue in favor of Cuba's independence. He also addressed some of the problems affecting Cuban society, especially the ill-prepared public educational system that neglected the study of the natural sciences in favor of the humanities. While Varela and Luz were mostly motivated by their religious faith, Varona was motivated by his secular commitment to meliorism, working to improve the human condition based on a feeling of human solidarity. Yet all three men helped educate the Cuban youth, instilling in them a sense of civic duty and a healthy patriotism so that they could serve their country by defending liberal ideas and republican institutions.

Logic

Although Varela, Luz, and Varona were trained in Aristotelian logic, they were critical of it. In his third and last edition of his *Miscelánea filosófica* (1827), Varela questioned the value of syllogistic logic as a way of acquiring knowledge. He writes, "[T]odo el arte silogístico consiste en sacar una consecuencia particular de una proposición general" [Syllogistic logic consists in deducing a particular conclusion from a general proposition] ("Miscelánea filosófica" 330–331). Varela rightly claimed that the truth of a universal or general proposition, such as "all humans are mortal," cannot be established by any syllogism or deductive reasoning but rather through experience.

For Varela, it is the inductive method of observation that helps us focus on particular facts to generate a true judgment about a universal proposition describing those facts. He proposes to "buscar en los hechos particulares la verdad de los generales, teniendo por guías la observación y la experiencia" [find in particular facts the truth about general ones, having as a guide our observations and experiences] ("Miscelánea filosófica" 332). Similarly, Luz, as a leading participant in La Polémica, also defended the priority of observation and experience over syllogistic logic. He favored the teaching of natural science first, especially physics, rather than first teaching logic, psychology, and morality, as was commonly done in the scholastic tradition.

Varona, like his two predecessors, had a passion for the new inductive method in science. In addition to his classic work, *Conferencias filosóficas: Lógica* (1880), he wrote an influential short introductory textbook on logic, *Nociones de lógica* (1902), for secondary schools. In this work, he proclaims, "La reforma de nuestra enseñanza se ha inspirado en el propósito de arrancar la juventud cubana de la disciplina puramente teórica que estaba atrofiando sus actividades mentales. Trae a primer plano al profesor que ha de dirigir al alumno por el campo de la observación y la experiencia" [our pedagogical reform has tried to pluck out the Cuban youth from a purely speculative discipline that has atrophied their mental abilities. First and foremost, our professors will instruct students to focus their attention on the field of observation and experience] (*Nociones* v). Like Varela and Luz, he believed that our inductive inferences precede our deductive reasoning. While Varona, like Luz, agreed with Varela's criticisms of Aristotelian logic, his views on education were influenced more by a conception of British empiricism than by Varela's critique of formal logic. Latin American authors often use the term "positivism" in reference to British empiricism, Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism, and Auguste Comte's positivism. It was John

Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843) that had a substantive influence on Varona's defense of empiricism and his preference for inductive reasoning. The latter is known as inductivism and as the pole star for modern scientific research.

The Method

While their method of teaching modern philosophy and science was conditioned by their preference for inductivism, there are important differences between Varela's support for eclecticism and Luz's and Varona's adoption of British empiricism, especially John Locke's version of it. Also, Varona was an avid defender of Herbert Spencer's evolutionism, especially in ethics, and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

For Varela, the appropriate method in philosophy is eclectic. Thus, despite his criticisms of Victor Cousin, the French scholar and founder of modern eclecticism, Varela, like his former teacher and mentor at the San Carlos Seminary, José Agustín Caballero, defended what he conceived of as classical eclecticism. He identified such eclecticism with Potamo of Alexandria from around the second century BC. He borrowed this information almost verbatim from Caballero's textbook, *Philosophia electiva.*

For some, such as the influential philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, the term "eclecticism" has a negative connotation of syncretism, because they view it as trying to reconcile ideas and theories that are incongruous. For others, such as Caballero and Varela, the term "eclecticism" has a positive connotation. For them, being an eclectic philosopher amounts to having a capacity for choosing coherent and compelling ideas, hypotheses, theories, and arguments independently of their provenance, avoiding the infamous *magister dixit.* Also, in adopting his own version of eclecticism Varela criticized any grand system-building in philosophy; such criticism is typically found in the practice of philosophy in Cuba and in other Latin American nations.

Since Varela believed in the superiority of induction over deduction, he argued that one should not bother with explanations whose possible truth or falsity might have no practical results. In his *Miscelánea filosófica*, he offers the following criterion: "En la práctica puede establecerse como norma que toda cuestión que resuelta, por la afirmativa y por la negativa, da iguales resultados para la explicación de los hechos, es inútil" [as a practical norm, one can argue that any explanation of an issue, being equally resolved in the affirmative or in the negative, is useless] ("Miscelánea filosófica" 367). As applied to the natural sciences, his criterion seems to foreshadow the pragmatic method

defended by the American philosopher William James in his *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1943).

Varela illustrated how his criterion works with the following example: "Lo mismo dirige el entendimiento para la adquisición de las ciencias un innatista que un sensualista, y así no importa mucho decidir cuál de los dos sistemas es verdadero, y la cuestión debe considerarse como una curiosidad filosófica" [Being a rationalist or an empiricist makes no difference in how we acquire knowledge in the natural sciences, so it does not matter much to decide which of the two systems is true. One should view doing so as a philosophical curiosity] ("Carta" 239). Varela believed that the value of scientific research should be gauged by its results rather than by claims about truth. For example, we might never know which of the two hypotheses is true: whether the virus Sars-Cov2 that causes Covid-19 escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology Laboratory or whether it was transmitted by a still non-identified animal from the Wuhan Market in China, or whether none of the two hypotheses are true. Yet we do know that vaccines against the virus prevent deaths. That is what would have mattered to Varela.

Like Varela, Luz was influenced by Bacon's new method of induction and by Locke's empiricism. Luz assumed that guiding students using a method of observation and generalization from analogous experiences would allow them to acquire knowledge. He believed that from a chain of specific observations students would acquire knowledge of universal propositions. Luz presupposes that "en las ciencias naturales se marcha de los hechos a las teorías" [in the natural sciences we go from facts to theories] ("Advertencia" 71). Varela and Luz assumed that this controversial belief is true. But neither science nor our knowledge of the world are based on such a belief. Science depends on conjectures. Such conjectures or hypotheses rely on people's presuppositions about the world, and whether those conjectures pass muster when tested. For example, no amount of people's individual experiences can prove that the principle of universal causation, namely that every event is caused by something or other, is true. And yet, our knowledge or beliefs about the world are contingent on the assumption that such a principle is true or at least reliable.

Varona welcomed Mill's inductivism in logic. He avoided conflating our acquisition of general ideas from particular experiences with the conception of induction. He writes, "La primera es un registro de los casos observados. La segunda añade á ese registro la convicción de que los casos futuros serán iguales á los pasados" [The first registers our observation of particular experiences. The second adds to particular experiences our conviction that

future experiences will be like our past ones] (*Nociones* 72). Varona's view of induction is vulnerable to the objection already raised against Varela's and Luz's conception of it.

While the triumvirate of Varela, Luz, and Varona were aware of David Hume's ideas and arguments, they ignored Hume's challenge of induction. No matter how many observations we make of a given experience, we will never be able to know with certainty that our future experiences will resemble our past experiences. We can neither inductively nor deductively prove that the principle of the uniformity of nature is true. Nevertheless, one might accept it as being true or at least reliable because no other principle or argument presently exists that can successfully explain as much. Varona suggested such a way of reasoning when one realizes the limits of induction. He writes, "En esos casos podemos *conjeturar, suponer* la generalización á que no hemos llegado por la vía inductiva; y observar si sus aplicaciones deductivas se conforman con los hechos" [In these cases, we might *conjecture, suppose* the generalization that we have been unable to arrive at by way of induction, and observe if its deductive applications correspond to the facts] (*Nociones* 140). Varona's view of conjectures in science is evocative of Karl R. Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (1963). However, unlike Popper's view that theories and hypotheses in science can only be falsified rather than verified, Varona believed that scientific theories and hypotheses could be verified, thereby ignoring Hume's challenge of induction.

Morality and Politics

While the three philosophers/pedagogues defended liberal and republican ideas, a tension exists between their consequentialist conception of morality and their defense of citizens' social and political rights. This tension is most striking in Varela's works. He argued against those who embrace a shallow Epicurean conception of morality based on physical pleasure alone. According to him, "el placer es producido por la posesión de todo bien" [people's pleasure supervenes upon that which is good]. He underscores that "[e]l mismo amor a Dios es un placer el mas recto . . . puede decirse que el placer y la pena son los móviles de la naturaleza humana" [our love for God is the most rightful pleasure . . . it can be said that pleasure and pain condition our human nature to act] ("Miscelánea filosófica" 369). As a result, Varela defended Jeremy Bentham's principle of utility as a way of evaluating all human actions and as the foundation of people's rights, namely the idea that

the rightness or wrongness of an action or rule is determined by whether it promotes a greater balance of pleasure over pain in the long run.

Varela, however, was unaware of the tension that exists between his hedonist conception of the good, including his support for Bentham's utilitarian principle, and his defense of imprescriptible rights of people as found in the 1812 Spanish monarchy's *Constitución política de la monarquía española*, also known as *La Constitution de Cádiz* or *La Pepa*. In 1820, the tyrannical Spanish King Ferdinand VII was forced to restore the constitution of 1812. Cubans enthusiastically supported such restoration, so that La Real Sociedad de Amigos del País [The Royal Society of Friends of the Country], at the behest of Bishop Espada, decided to fund a new chair on constitutional law at the San Carlos Seminary to study the virtues of the newly restored Spanish constitution.

Varela was elected and appointed to this new chair. Since there were no textbooks on constitutional law, Bishop Espada asked him to write one. Varela wrote "Observaciones sobre la constitución política de la monarquía española" (1821) [Commentaries on the Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy]. In his commentaries, Varela highlighted the liberal components of the constitution. For example, in his second commentary, he writes: "Los pueblos pierden su libertad, o por la opresión de un tirano, o por la malicia y ambición de algunos individuos, que se valen del mismo pueblo para esclavizarlo" [people lose their liberty, be it by the oppression of a tyrant or by the sense of malice and ambition of some individuals who, while proclaiming their sovereignty, manipulate the same populace to enslave them] ("Observaciones" 15). Aware of the threat of tyranny, Varela argued in favor of the imprescriptible rights of people, including the rights to liberty and private property.

Varela's conception of imprescriptible rights still reverberated in twenty-first-century Cuban politics, as embedded in the Varela Project, instituted by the late Oswaldo Payá. As a founding member of the Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación, Payá led a campaign to change the Cuban constitution by collecting over twenty-four thousand signatures in 2002, calling for a national referendum to respect the actual constitutional rights of all citizens. Despite the recognition in the Cuban constitution of 1992 of such a right to referenda, the regime simply ignored it and went ahead to amend the constitution, making the socialist nature of the Cuban state irrevocable. Given what he wrote about the imprescriptible rights of people, Varela would have been appalled by such a tyrannical abuse of power.

In addition to his defense of liberalism and constitutionalism as found in the reestablished constitution of the Spanish monarchy, one can refer to Varela's first textbook, published in 1812, *Instituciones de filosofía ecléctica*, to show the contemporary relevance of some of Varela's liberal ideas. Part II, Dissertation II, "Nociones generales sobre el arte de la crítica," includes a section discussing the nature of monuments, "De los monumentos," that anticipates the twenty-first-century global debate about whether to remove historical monuments honoring vicious ideas, such as those recognizing former slaveholders, tyrants, or individuals who in their lifetime defended racist ideas. Varela offered four rules to deal with historical monuments, the first of which illustrates his moral outrage against tyrants and their historical legacy. He writes: "Los monumentos erigidos bajo el gobierno de un tirano, contra la realidad y el sentido de la historia, ni merecen fe ni expresan la voluntad de los pueblos. A los tiranos se les erigieron estatuas y otros monumentos que los pueblos desearían ver devorados por el fuego" [The monuments built under the aegis of a tyrant, against historical facts and the meaning of history, should not be honored, because these do not reflect the will of the people. The people would have wished to destroy by fire the monuments and statues built to honor tyrants] ("Instituciones" 46). In Varela's view, people would have wished to destroy these monuments because of the harm the perception of the monuments could bring to the victims by reminding them of the vicious policies of the tyrants.

Unlike Varela, Luz seemed to be critical of the principle of utility in his "Doctrinas de psicología, lógica y moral expuestas en la clase de filosofía del Colegio de San Cristobal" of 1835, also known as the Lectures of Carraguao. In the section "Luz de la razón y moralidad de las acciones" [Light of Reason and the Morality of Actions], he writes, "[l]os hombres jamas gradúan el mérito o demérito de las acciones por la utilidad que produzcan" [People never determine the merit or demerit of their actions by their resulting utility] ("Doctrinas" 84). And yet, in La Polémica, Luz attempted to reconcile the argument between Manuel González del Valle, a professor at the University of Havana and defender of neo-scholasticism and the priority of duty over utilitarian considerations, and the priest Francisco Ruiz, a professor at the San Carlos Seminary who defended modern philosophy and utilitarianism.

Since González del Valle cited parts of Luz's Lectures of Carraguao in which the latter criticized the principle of utility, Luz tried to explain his seemingly incoherent position regarding this principle, offering a distinctive understanding of the term "utility." He writes, "útil es un ferrocarril pero más útil es la justicia. La palabra útil se aplica a cuánto puede aprovecharse así en

lo físico como en lo moral, y por lo mismo contraída ya a la moral, no puede decir relación sino a la bondad o malicia de las acciones" [Useful is a railroad train but more useful is justice. The term "useful" is applicable to anything that we can benefit from whether physically or morally. And if we restrict its use to that which is moral, it is ascribable to generous or malicious actions] ("El principio" 351). But Luz conflated that which is right as a matter of justice with that which is good as the consequences of an action. He argued that if both positions are correctly understood, they seem to be consistent. Nevertheless, he ignored the fact that at times they pull in different directions.

Luz, like Varela, grounded morality in Christianity. He states, "No hay moral más sublime que la de Jesucristo" [There is no more sublime morality than that of Jesus Christ] ("Doctrinas" 86). He spent most of his life educating Cuban youth to become free and responsible citizens committed to improving society. He founded the famous secondary school El Salvador in 1848, where he taught until his untimely death in 1862. While he did not discuss politics in school, some of his students became prominent leaders in Cuba's wars of independence, such as Ignacio Agramonte, a general from the province of Puerto Príncipe, now known as Camagüey, during the 1868 War of Independence and an unconditional abolitionist and supporter of republican ideals, and Manuel Sanguily, a colonel during the same war and a distinguished historian, literary critic, and journalist. Sanguily was appointed Secretary of State in 1909 during José Miguel Gómez's presidency.

Unlike Varela and Luz, Varona rejected utilitarianism as a universal moral principle. Likewise, he rejected both egoism and altruism as the foundation of morality. Instead, he argued in favor of the foundational role that people's emotions play to evaluate their moral behavior. He writes, "la vida moral es posible, no porque esté informada por conceptos, sino porque depende de la esfera afectiva . . . . Las reglas morales empiezan por ser sentimientos morales." [moral life is possible not because of moral concepts but rather because it depends on the affective sphere . . . . Moral rules begin with our moral sentiments] (*Conferencias sobre el fundamento* 33). As a determinist, Varona believed that our moral traits, including many of our virtues and vices, are hereditary. By focusing on how people act in society, he argued that vices, such as dipsomania and varied criminal impulses and virtues, such as religious mysticism, are inherited. Likewise, he contended that our moral sentiments are inherited. Thus, although for him people's heredity does not necessarily determine their sentiments, it conditions or predisposes them to act in certain ways.

Varona contended that our sense of empathy, rather than principles, moves us to act. He writes, "Sentimos placer ante el placer ajeno; sentimos dolor por el dolor de otros. Esto último es más frecuente, pero la compasión no es la única forma de simpatía" [We are pleased when we see that others are pleased, and we feel sorrow when we see that others suffer. The latter feeling is more frequent, but compassion is not the only form of sympathy] (*Conferencias sobre el fundamento* 87). Since he rejected both egoism and altruism as motivating principles of morality, he criticized philanthropists and socialists alike. Varona argued: "La moral exclusivamente altruista es una quimera, como lo es la abnegación completa de la personalidad en aras del bienestar ó la felicidad social ó de la humanidad" [The morality of pure altruism is just a chimera, the same way that people's renunciation of their own good on behalf of social or humanity's happiness is also a chimera] (*Conferencias sobre el fundamento* 92). Nevertheless, he grounded morality in people's sentiments of social solidarity. According to him, "El hombre es un ser social, por consiguiente moral" [people are social; consequently they are moral]; he argued that "la moralidad no es sino el sentimiento . . . de la solidaridad social" [morality is just the sentiment . . . of social solidarity] (*Conferencias sobre el fundamento* 179).

Varela and, to some extent, Luz embraced utilitarianism along with their Christian beliefs. As result, they accepted universal moral principles and values. Unlike them, Varona's naturalistic conception of social solidarity committed him to moral relativism. In his view, whether people feel a certain sense of solidarity for others is predominantly subjective. Therefore, the notions of morally right or wrong would depend on how a given person or group feels about another person or group. Also, since Varona, unlike Varela and Luz, is an atheist and a moral skeptic, he cannot appeal to universal moral principles to settle moral queries in society. Still, despite his atheism and moral skepticism, Varona's conception of solidarity is not far from Christian solidarity based on the Golden Rule of doing to others what you would have them do to you, a rule that Varela and Luz upheld.

Despite the exceptional moral courage and integrity of Varela, Luz, and Varona as public intellectuals, they also had their moral myopia and failures. Varela, for example, wrote a speech in 1818 on behalf of La Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana eulogizing the generous economic policies towards Cuba of King Ferdinand VII, the same king-tyrant that later would put a prize on Varela's head for criticizing his despotic policies at home and abroad. Luz, while a critic of the slave trade, inherited enslaved people from his family and did not publicly advocate abolition. Varona, like other public intellectuals and

politicians, including Manuel Sanguily, remained silent about the infamous 1912 massacre of thousands of Afro-Cubans, most of them members of the Independent Party of Color, founded in 1908 and including former members of the army that helped liberate Cuba from Spain. This silence remains an insufficiently explored dark chapter of racism in Cuban history.

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