The Thematic Section of this issue of Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad presents a commemoration of the centennial of the birth of Eduardo Nicol, one of the most original and interesting thinkers among Spanish exiles in Mexico. We felt there was no better way to pay homage to Nicol than by inviting scholars to discuss and debate his work, and thus enjoy an excellent opportunity to focus our gaze on 20th-century Latin American thought, the contributions of which—and whose undeniable richness and variety—still merit the attention of scholars and commentators in both Spain and Latin America. After all, Nicol himself argued that communication “is only possible from the self” and that man “expresses his self and transforms it upon expressing it”, so that “the self of man becomes evident in a direct and unmistakable way through human expression”. The importance of this conviction is thoroughly explored in the four articles included in this issue. In his “Introduction” to the Thematic Section, Antolín Sánchez Cuervo points out, quite acutely, that Nicol presented a total—and original—reform of philosophical reason, one that was sensitive to the medullar concerns of our time and that spanned metaphysics, ethics, the limits of science and Hispanism (whose tendencies he subjected to a severe, but productive, critique).

In general, Nicol enjoyed a far-reaching, fecund career in teaching in Mexico, in addition to elaborating a substantial and original set of writings. His contributions acquire logic and meaning, first, in the context of the contemporary debate among universal cultures and, second, as an important expression of Spanish-language thought; one that contains fundamental philosophical reasonings. In more than one sense, the work of this philosopher, a Spanish exile in Mexico (like José Gaos), constitutes a good example of a testimony of Spain and America united by a common history and culture, and of the relevance of their concern.
to achieve goals, also shared. Thus it is that Nicol’s work presents a vision of the richness and complexity of contemporary Latin American thought that is specific and panoramic at one and the same time, in addition to constituting an indispensable element for evaluating his historical and contextual sources, and his main thematic areas of interest; all of this as a fundamental contribution to understanding his challenges and perspectives, both present and future.

We are, therefore, most grateful to Antolín Sánchez Cuervo for his organization of this section.

In the Documents Section, we publish two texts—with a “Presentation” by Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez—of great interest for the history of Mexico’s National Autonomous University (UNAM) during the critical period when its institutional function and mission were being defined. The two essays present accounts of the differences that gave rise to a conflict between the federal government and the university’s authorities or, as Gutiérrez keenly points out, that formed part of “a trail of interrelated events that determined the politics of higher education in the Cardenist regime”. The government’s attempt to control higher education in the country spurred university authorities to respond through appeals for autonomy and freedom in teaching in its efforts to reject that project and to voice their criticisms through several means, though this meant a period of financial pressure for the University and a series of confrontations with the State.

The first document, dated September 9th 1935, is addressed to the Board of Deans, the Directors of the Schools and Institutes and the Heads of Groups of the H. Consejo Universitario (“Honorable University Council”), and to the President of the Republic, Lázaro Cárdenas. The second contains the President’s reply, addressed to the University’s Rector, Fernando Ocaranza, dated the 13th of the same month. The former emphasized how important it was for the University to enjoy the freedom required to organize its study programs and assure access to the economic resources that task required (while denouncing attacks designed to return control to the State, including an “anti-university campaign” launched in an attempt to bring the executive and legislative powers into the fray). In his response to Rector Ocaranza, General Cárdenas noted, among other points, that while it was convenient that the University enjoy sufficient autonomy to fulfill its objectives, it was not a sovereign entity free to interpret the laws or, much less, oppose their spirit. As Gutiérrez points out in his “Presentation”, this conflict brought into the open an unassailable obstacle to autonomy, given that “The ideal of University autonomy” was based on its capacity “to carry out its functions using its own resources, and with no need to depend on external decisions”. However, “the subsidy given by the Government of the Republic to the Institution (…), though guaranteeing its survival, placed it in a position of subordination by perpetuating its economic dependence on the State”.

In the first article in the General Section, Diana Luque and Shoko Doode propose cultural diversity and the importance of considering indigenous sacred sites as “categories of conservation” as strategies linked to the challenge of environmental sustainability, in their article, “Sacredness, Territoriality and Biodiversity among the Comcáac (Seri): Indigenous Sacred Sites as Categories of Environmental Conservation”. Western tradition has consecrated the idea that nature is not mankind’s proper environment but, rather, an adverse circumstance that, as such, is to be molded and structured into a house or dwelling-place according to men’s unpredictable and changeable cultural fantasies. Thus, this study defines the environmental problematic as part of the crisis of civilization in a historical-cultural context. The authors emphasize the imminent need for western culture to open up to, listen to and learn from, “other” versions of the nature-society relationship, “that from a complex perspective, include belief systems, worldviews, ethical systems, endemic knowledge, cartographies, territorialities, uses and customs, forms of government, languages and artistic expressions”.

Here, despite the existence of a wide variety of manifestations that are not simple translations of western sacredness (as “Comcáac sacredness” shows), indigenous peoples can become very important allies of environmental conservation thanks to their cultural contributions and because their territories are characterized by concentrations of biodiversity. Thus, Luque and Doode conclude: “Mankind’s salvaging of these natural cultural reservoirs, as a means of reversing the West’s primeval error (the “de-animizing” of nature), is the true motive for national societies to come to consider indigenous territories as sacred sites”.

to achieve goals, also shared. Thus it is that Nicol’s work presents a vision of the richness and complexity of contemporary Latin American thought that is specific and panoramic at one and the same time, in addition to constituting an indispensable element for evaluating his historical and contextual sources, and his main thematic areas of interest; all of this as a fundamental contribution to understanding his challenges and perspectives, both present and future.

We are, therefore, most grateful to Antolín Sánchez Cuervo for his organization of this section.

In the Documents Section, we publish two texts—with a “Presentation” by Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez—of great interest for the history of Mexico’s National Autonomous University (UNAM) during the critical period when its institutional function and mission were being defined. The two essays present accounts of the differences that gave rise to a conflict between the federal government and the university’s authorities or, as Gutiérrez keenly points out, that formed part of “a trail of interrelated events that determined the politics of higher education in the Cardenist regime”. The government’s attempt to control higher education in the country spurred university authorities to respond through appeals for autonomy and freedom in teaching in its efforts to reject that project and to voice their criticisms through several means, though this meant a period of financial pressure for the University and a series of confrontations with the State.

The first document, dated September 9th 1935, is addressed to the Board of Deans, the Directors of the Schools and Institutes and the Heads of Groups of the H. Consejo Universitario (“Honorable University Council”), and to the President of the Republic, Lázaro Cárdenas. The second contains the President’s reply, addressed to the University’s Rector, Fernando Ocaranza, dated the 13th of the same month. The former emphasized how important it was for the University to enjoy the freedom required to organize its study programs and assure access to the economic resources that task required (while denouncing attacks designed to return control to the State, including an “anti-university campaign” launched in an attempt to bring the executive and legislative powers into the fray). In his response to Rector Ocaranza, General Cárdenas noted, among other points, that while it was convenient that the University enjoy sufficient autonomy to fulfill its objectives, it was not a sovereign entity free to interpret the laws or, much less, oppose their spirit. As Gutiérrez points out in his “Presentation”, this conflict brought into the open an unassailable obstacle to autonomy, given that “The ideal of University autonomy” was based on its capacity “to carry out its functions using its own resources, and with no need to depend on external decisions”. However, “the subsidy given by the Government of the Republic to the Institution (…), though guaranteeing its survival, placed it in a position of subordination by perpetuating its economic dependence on the State”.

In the first article in the General Section, Diana Luque and Shoko Doode propose cultural diversity and the importance of considering indigenous sacred sites as “categories of conservation” as strategies linked to the challenge of environmental sustainability, in their article, “Sacredness, Territoriality and Biodiversity among the Comcáac (Seri): Indigenous Sacred Sites as Categories of Environmental Conservation”. Western tradition has consecrated the idea that nature is not mankind’s proper environment but, rather, an adverse circumstance that, as such, is to be molded and structured into a house or dwelling-place according to men’s unpredictable and changeable cultural fantasies. Thus, this study defines the environmental problematic as part of the crisis of civilization in a historical-cultural context. The authors emphasize the imminent need for western culture to open up to, listen to and learn from, “other” versions of the nature-society relationship, “that from a complex perspective, include belief systems, worldviews, ethical systems, endemic knowledge, cartographies, territorialities, uses and customs, forms of government, languages and artistic expressions”. Here, despite the existence of a wide variety of manifestations that are not simple translations of western sacredness (as “Comcáac sacredness” shows), indigenous peoples can become very important allies of environmental conservation thanks to their cultural contributions and because their territories are characterized by concentrations of biodiversity. Thus, Luque and Doode conclude: “Mankind’s salvaging of these natural cultural reservoirs, as a means of reversing the West’s primeval error (the “de-animizing” of nature), is the true motive for national societies to come to consider indigenous territories as sacred sites”.


ABSTRACTS

THE IDEA OF MAN

Ricardo Horneffer
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Traditional attempts to define man have been of a categorical nature. As such, the different theories have omitted certain particular characteristics that they consider to be “accidental”. For Nicol, in contrast, man, understood as the “being of expression” –who manifests, in reality, a common form of being and an individual mode of existence– has forged, throughout the course of history, distinct ideas about himself; all of them true, but none of them definitive.

Keywords: phenomenology, expression, symbol, logos, community, individuality, historicity

EDUARDO NICOL AND THE FASCINATION WITH THE LOGOS: PHILOSOPHICAL VOCATION AND POETRY

Ricardo Pinilla Burgos
Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Spain

The starting point of this article is the admiration, radical in the philosophical sense, that Nicol discovers in the existence of the logos in his final work: Formas de hablar sublimes: poesía y filosofía (1990), though it also examines the important horizon of his entire opus, especially his Metafísica de la expresión. Topics analyzed include the question of philosophy-poetry and the need for a reincarnation of the expressive and poetic elements of the word, including love and the transformation of and by the word.

Keywords: admiration, philosophy, love, poetry

*A final word: with the publication of issue #112 we include an invitation to our readers to submit your new contributions in the areas of Social Sciences and Humanities in order to continue this common undertaking entitled Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad. In addition, we are pleased to announce that our Web page –www.revistarelaciones.com– is now available. We expect that this, together with other projects that are nearing culmination, will allow us to reach an ever wider public.

Paul C. Kersey Johnson
Traductor