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J Joan Roura-Parella and his Presence in the United States¹

“I am always learning” (Joan Roura-Parella)

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abstract

The philosopher Joan Roura-Parella, born in Tortellà (Catalonia) in 1897, was an active member of the University of Barcelona Teaching Seminar, from which he obtained his doctorate in 1937 with a thesis supervised by Joaquim Xirau. In 1939, he was a member of the group that accompanied the poet Antonio Machado into exile. After living for a period in Mexico (1939-1945), in 1946 he went to the United States to lecture at Wesleyan University. Under the influence of Krausist philosophy and Quaker spirituality, he explored the humanistic significance of culture, as a result of which his teaching –inspired by the cosmovisionary thinking of Eduard Spranger, with whom he had contacts in Berlin between 1930 and 1932 –took on an aesthetic dimension. With this background, his philosophy of education points towards a vitalist aesthetic formalism, so that education becomes a process –akin to the neo-humanist *Bildung* tradition– in which an individual develops or gives form to himself throughout his whole life. He died in 1983 in Middletown (Connecticut).

key words

Joan Roura-Parella, exile, United States, education, *Bildung*, aesthetics, Catalan pedagogy.

Elsewhere we have, either individually or collectively, addressed the personal and intellectual trajectory of Joan Roura-Parella (1897-1983).² On this oc-

1 This paper forms part of the Research Project of the National R+D+I Plan (2008-2011) “The Catalan Contribution to Spanish Aesthetics (1800-1936)”, subsidised by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

2 Among other studies, we cite the following works: E. Collelledmont and C. Vilanou (1997). *Joan Roura-Parella (1897-1983). En el centenari del seu naixement*. Barcelona: Facultat de Ped-

casión, we will look at the last period of his life, which began in 1946 when he left Mexico, where he had arrived as a political exile in 1939 fleeing the repression of General Franco, to move to the United States of America, where he enjoyed such great prestige that *The New York Times*, in its edition of 28th December 1983, reported his death on Saint Stephen's Day of that year.³ We know that Joan Roura-Parella – Joaquim Xirau's favourite student – was one of the pillars of the University of Barcelona Teaching Seminar, where, at the end of the Spanish Civil War, he programmed a course on "The Modelling Action of Landscape on the Child's Soul". Naturally, this idea of the influence of landscape on the formation of children, related to Romantic and Krausist aesthetic sources, was widely developed in his American exile. Once settled in Mexico, in 1939 he theorised about aesthetic pleasure and artistic creation in a series of three articles published in the journal *Full Català* in 1942, which have been reprinted thanks to the generosity of Professor Ignasi Roviró.⁴

In 1946, Roura-Parella joined the Department of Romance Languages and Humanities at Wesleyan University, in Middletown (Connecticut), remaining there for 19 years until 1965, when he became professor emeritus. Just after he retired, this university started accepting students from different ethnic minorities. Thus, for decades it was linked to the thinking of white Anglo-Saxon and Protestant man, in keeping with the puritan spirit of the American pioneers. Three years before, in 1962, Wesleyan University had taken on a more secular character and was soon considered one of the best American universities as it formed part of the A-A category.

Thanks to his friend Cornelius Krusée, who he had met in Prague in 1934 (4th International Congress of Philosophy) and in Paris in 1937 (Descar-

gogia; I. Vilafranca and C. Vilanou, "Luis de Zulueta, visto por Juan Roura-Parella". *Historia de la Educación* 21 (2002), pp. 287-305; C. Vilanou, "Juan Roura-Parella (1897-1983) y la difusión de la pedagogía de las ciencias del espíritu en Latinoamérica". *Historia de la Educación* 22-23 (2003-2004), pp. 301-316; C. Vilanou, "La pedagogía, ciencia de segunda clase (En torno a un informe remitido por Juan Roura-Parella desde Berlín en febrero de 1932)". *Historia de la Educación* 24 (2005), pp. 463-484; C. Vilanou, "Juan Roura-Parella (1897-1983) y los orígenes de la Pedagogía universitaria en Cataluña", in J. Ruiz Berrio (ed.) (2005). *Pedagogía y educación ante el siglo XXI*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense, pp. 171-201.

3 The news read as follows: "Juan Roura-Parella, professor emeritus of Romance languages and humanities at Wesleyan University, died Monday at Middlesex Memorial Hospital in Middletown, Conn. He was 86 years old and lived in Middletown. A native of Catalonia, Professor Roura-Parella left Spain during its civil war. He was a professor of psychology at the University of Mexico from 1939 to 1946 and then joined Wesleyan, remaining there until his retirement in 1965. He is survived by his wife, the former Teresa Ramon Lligé."

tes Congress), Roura-Parella was able to move to the United States. After their encounters in Europe, he and Krusée happened to meet in Mexico in 1942, resuming a friendship which helped Roura-Parella settle in America where he also had the support of the thinker Victor Lloyd Butterfield, President of Wesleyan University between 1943 and 1967. Since 1984, this American university has annually awarded the Juan Roura-Parella Prize for undergraduate students: “an undergraduate whose work represents the kind of catholic curiosity and general learning that Professor Juan Roura-Parella exemplified.” His memory is very much alive today in this university, as shown by the fact that in 2007 a bench on its campus was dedicated to him and his wife.

Moreover, Roura-Parella, who left relatives and acquaintances in Mexico, always remained loyal to his Mexican friends who supported him during the first moments of exile. Thus he kept in contact with the poet Agustí Bartra, telling him of his desire to remain in the United States soon after leaving Mexico. He maintained his friendship with Agustí Bartra to the point of securing him a scholarship from the Guggenheim Foundation so that he could write and translate poetry in the United States, which allowed him to produce an anthology of American poetry. Joan Roura-Parella also received a scholarship from this Foundation in 1954.

At first, the plan was to stay for a short time thanks to the Wider Quaker Fellowship programme. In the journal *The Friend*, Roura-Parella published an extensive addendum called “Religious Experience and the Quakers”, a synthesis of his works on the Quaker experience which were written in Mexico in late 1944.⁵ The editors’ note reads as follows: “The author of the following article, and his wife, have recently applied for membership in the Wider Quaker Fellowship. They are refugees from the University of Barcelona, now living in Mexico City.”

In this article, Roura-Parella recorded some of the Quakers’ basic ideas which, broadly speaking, coincide with those of the reformers of human gender (Comenius, Leibniz, Pestalozzi, Krause, etc.) who advocated universal fraternity among men through a notion of Humanity that emphasises the role of Christian love. In our author’s eyes, Quaker thinking is characterised by a set of principles in tune with the values of early Christianity. Some of these aspects or principles include: presence of religious feeling in man’s heart (“Religion signifies the perception of God in the heart”); Christ as a model to follow and imitate (“Jesus is the model of that exemplary morality”); mysticism and observation of the Gospel (“This

5 J. Roura-Parella, “Religious experience and the Quakers”. *The Friend* (Philadelphia), vol. 119, no. 11, 1945.

Quaker religion is a pure mystic Christianity in which is preserved the spirit of the Gospel"); respect, toleration and condemnation of any kind of violence ("Sacred respect for the life of others, toleration, and liberty and complete condemnation of wars"); assessment of the interpersonal relationship and friendship ("In the soul of the Quaker the 'I' and the 'You' coincide"); and rejection of any type of discrimination ("To give, to serve, to devote himself to the whole body without distinction of sex, class, people, creed, or race"). This is, in conclusion, Roura-Parella's view of Quaker religiosity, with silent worship as the way to find God within oneself, in an Augustinian line of argumentation: "Without a theological system, Quakerism is a state of soul which expresses itself in a form of life; without fixed dogmas, without ritual or priesthood, without a concrete social program, with a minimum of organization to carry out its mission, Quaker religion works by spontaneous and direct communication with God, which is manifest in silent worship."

Roura-Parella was originally awarded a scholarship for a few weeks at Pendle Hill, a social and religious studies centre dependent on the Quaker community and incorporated into the University of Pennsylvania. After this stay in the United States, he returned to Mexico where he continued lecturing at the UNAM, while enjoying his rights as a member of *El Colegio de México*, to which he had belonged since his arrival in America. In any case, after his visit to the United States, he became more interested in American issues, which now supplanted his previous predilection for Germanic culture. He had been awarded a scholarship in Germany between 1930 and 1932, and, through William James, he expanded his study of American social psychology, a subject he taught at the UNAM during the second semester of 1945, a few weeks before definitively settling in the United States.

1. Professor in the United States

When Joan Roura-Parella arrived in the United States in 1945 he was 48 and at the height of his intellectual maturity. As previously mentioned, he soon joined the Pendle Hill Religious and Social Research Institution of Pennsylvania, a teaching centre linked to the Quaker movement which in its thinking proclaims respect, simplicity, harmony and research of the spirit. Pendle Hill had been founded in 1930 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) a few miles away in the south-east of Philadelphia. Pendle Hill, characterised by its eminent puritan atmosphere, is still surrounded today by a natural area of 23 acres of land in which 140 different tree species are planted. He had left Mexico City in mid-December 1944 and expected to stay in Philadelphia for three months until early March 1945, although he remained a few weeks longer. In January 1946 we find him again at Pendle Hill after having suffered the traumatic experience of the miscarriage of his wife Teresa Ramon. How-

ever, he soon recovered his spirits upon receiving several offers from American universities and took the opportunity to start writing a novel in English for which he already had an editor, although it was never finally published. On 8th June 1946, he sent a letter from Pendle Hill to Agustí Bartra commenting that he had five job offers for the next academic year. Soon after, in September 1946, he joined Wesleyan University, to which he was linked until his death.

Meanwhile, his philosophical and pedagogical system had become solid, despite not finding the appropriate outlet in the United States for the dissemination of his thinking, which had been formed in Germany within human sciences. Although this discipline enjoyed great prestige in Latin America between 1940 and 1970, it found resistance in the United States where the name of Dilthey was only known in “highly specialised philosophical circles.” Indeed, the tradition of experimental and behavioural psychology was deeply rooted in the United States, something which could not satisfy Roura-Parella for whom “the emergence of Watson’s behaviourism and his followers [was not] mere chance but the expression of a period which is losing the meaning of inner life.”⁶ Only some authors such as Allport had expressed some interest in the psychology of form (*Gestalt*), which in 1947, a few months after establishing his residence in the United States, gave him “hope for a future synthesis of the naturalist attitude and the attitude characteristic of human sciences.”

Roura-Parella hoped that this fusion was possible given that the time “seems ripe for it, as we have been able to observe in our social psychology course given at Wesleyan University from this synthetic point of view that American youths are more interested in the relationship between facts and their meaning than in facts themselves.”⁷ In this respect, it is worth noting his “Levels of Human Personality” course –we had access to the programme for the academic year 1958-59–, which is an updated adaptation of his course on the structure and unity of psychic life that he had previously taught in Mexico.

In the United States he had to combine his own intellectual interest in psychology and aesthetics with other obligations imposed on him by the academic authorities.⁸ Hence, he had to take on the teaching of diverse subjects rela-

6 J. Roura-Parella (1949). *Tema y variaciones de la personalidad*. Mexico: Biblioteca de Ensayos Sociológicos, p. 136.

7 J. Roura-Parella (1947). *El mundo histórico social (Ensayo sobre la morfología de la cultura de Dilthey)*. Mexico: Biblioteca de Ensayos Sociológicos/Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales (Universidad Nacional), p. 222.

8 Pere Bosch-Gimpera, who was rector of the University of Barcelona (1933-1939), comments on this situation in a letter dated in Mexico on 3rd December 1972: “I don’t know if I’ve already told you, with reference to the American universities, about the case of Roura

ted to history, literature and art, somewhat against his will but which he carried out with great efficacy. The subjects related to Spanish culture – whether the Spanish Golden Age (“The Golden Age 1500-1700”; “Governments, Mystics and Knights in the Spanish Golden Age”) or the history of Spain (“The perplexing course of the History of Spain”) –occupied many hours of his university teaching, which is notable for three main concerns: philosophy, psychology and art. Moreover, the history of Spain also interested him. Thus, in the latter course, Roura-Parella set out the process of Spanish history that began with the Iberian culture and ended with the Spanish Civil War, while presenting, in keeping with Krausist philosophy, Spain as unity in variety (Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country), while examining the possible union of the two Spains confronting each other in 1936, a confrontation that provoked his exile given his loyalty to the Republican cause. Thus, once settled at Wesleyan University he was able to combine his culturalist world view with his teaching obligations while adapting himself to a community that every Sunday at 11 am called a Friends Meeting-Quakers where much of the time was devoted to retreat and silence.

Looking at the correspondence he maintained with Agustí Bartra, we understand that he did not find it easy to acclimatise himself. On the one hand, he complained that he had many students and that he was forced to teach a large number of classes, something which hindered his adaptation to the frantic rhythm of American life, prompting more than a few comments that included his observation that “from the carrying out of the daily programme comes the rushing; that is, passing from one subject to another sometimes with the tongue hanging out in order to breath better.” In general, his views of Americans are laudatory because –after having suffered so many obstacles and difficulties (the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939, his later exit from Europe to America to flee Nazism, his first settling in Mexico to later move to the United States– he had placed his hope in this people and their culture, although he realised that “the north, an essentially progressive and futurist country, always helps the retrograde forces that want to maintain the ways of life that prevailed in the past.”

i Parella, who has been professor at Middletown, Connecticut. He is a philosopher and pedagogue, and during the first academic year he taught there he was called by the President of the University, who suggested that he also gave a seminar on Spanish literature. He replied that it was not his speciality. A colleague told him that this would compromise the extension of his contract. And when he said he felt unable to teach a seminar, the colleague assured him that it was very easy, that there was a Digest with selected fragments from the main Spanish authors that had to be discussed in the weekly two-hour seminar. He finally accepted” [P. Bosch-Gimpera–R. Olivar Bertrand (1978). *Correspondència 1969-1974*. Barcelona: Proa, pp. 167-168].

Nevertheless, Roura-Parella, loyal to a historical and culturalist cosmopolitanism, was aware of the poor attention that Americans paid to the past as they were only interested in the future: "Once an illustrious Wesleyan professor told me with a scornful tone: I don't know who my grandfather was! My colleague meant that he had turned his back on the past. There is no bridge between the past and the future. The present is fundamentally the moment to make the future."⁹ If to the familiar problems of adaptation we add the delicate health of his wife, without whom he felt lost, as he told Bartra, it is not surprising that he would confess, in a letter dated 12th October 1946 at Wesleyan University, that "our destiny, rather than tragic, is desperate," an assertion that reveals a certainly confused state of mind which gradually stabilised. Although he first intended to live for only one year in Middletown, he finally settled in the United States and acquired American nationality.

Everything indicates that Roura-Parella achieved great prestige as a professor during the nineteen years, between 1946 and 1965, that he remained at the Department of Romance Languages and Humanities of Wesleyan University, where he became professor emeritus. Upon his retirement in June 1965, he stated: "Wesleyan retires me, but I do not retire. I don't know the meaning of the word."¹⁰ However, once retired, he insisted on his intention to write an autobiographical novel, which on this occasion he completed and gave cyclostyle copies to his friends. At that moment, and as he stated in the university press, his interests leaned towards Goya, Rembrandt, Spinoza, Leibniz, Schiller and the Spanish mystics.

In his autobiographical writings fashioned into a novel, Roura-Parella records his loyalty to the Republic as well as his journey into exile as part of the group which also included Antonio Machado, who would come to leave an indelible mark on his way of thinking. Indeed, in his view, the Castilian poet was a real *vates*, an authentic prophet, who he admired throughout his life to the point of precipitating the aesthetic change of direction that he had initiated during the years of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona. Roura-Parella always remembered the moment when he gave up his turn to the poet to get on the ambulance which would take them into exile, in late January 1939, and Machado responded that he had all the time in the world, something that impressed Roura-Parella forever. "We are marked by that sad winter day when, close to

9 J. Roura-Parella, "El sentido del tiempo en las dos Américas, la del Norte y la del Sur (Contribución a la caractereología de ambas Américas)". *Revista Interamericana de Sociología*, 1968, p. 161.

10 J. Roura-Parella, "Retirement? Not for Juan Roura". *Wesleyan University News*, vol. III, no. 5, June 1965, p. 1.

death, we saw the poet, with stoic serenity, awaiting the moment to get on the vehicle that would take him into banishment. Unhurriedly, he decided to be the last to get on the ambulance. A mind of this spirit has overcome the tide of time and is now living within the dominions of eternity.”¹¹ In an article published in 1965, Roura-Parella wrote that Machado was a “voice of God” and “a purifier of Spanish sensitivity.” “Those who have lived live,” wrote Machado in his poem dedicated to Francisco Giner de los Ríos, his master at the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, to whom Roura-Parella also dedicated an article during his exile. To some extent, he also sought throughout his life to pursue this path – a true “clear way” – through a “living education” allowing access to the spiritual sphere where, along with being able to listen to the echo of the divine voice, the soul was vivified through education, culture and a Christian religiosity of a Franciscan nature, which connects with early Christianity and is not detached from the principles of Krausism that Giner had spread in Spain and which, moreover, does not break with Catholicism.

Once retired, Roura-Parella continued his teaching activity in diverse seminars, while contributing to different departments of the university, such as the Davison Art Center, where in 1971 he taught a course on “The Genius of Spanish Art”, probably a synthesis of the course “The Genius of Spain in Painting and Literature”. Moreover, during the academic year 1972–73 he approached the subject of “Goya and his World” and, in the following, another on the “Aesthetic Roots of Spanish Art”, in which he dealt with the figures of Picasso (representative of “intellectual expression”), Velázquez (who exteriorises “the impulse to represent reality”), and Miró and Dalí, as examples of the current of “symbolic art.” In any case, the two courses he taught most successfully were “Art in Human Experience” and “Art Style as a World View” which complemented each other in the sense that while the former approached art from the perspective of a phenomenology of human experience, in the latter he examined the great aesthetic cosmovisions. In fact, the first course – “Art in Human Experience” – lasted the whole academic year and was divided into two parts, which corresponded to each of the two semesters.¹² Meanwhile, the course “Art Style as a World View”, which

11 J. Roura-Parella (1949). *Tema y variaciones de la personalidad*, *Op. cit.*, p. 209. [This text is also found in other works in which he records that Machado “always believed in the eternity of the spirit as he essentially lived his whole life far below (or above) the common, ordinary and superficial life”].

12 This programme was reproduced in E. Colleldemont and C. Vilanou, *Op. cit.* Broadly speaking, the course was programmed as follows: First Semester. A.- Introduction; B.- Enjoyment of Art; C.- Mental Functions in Art Enjoyment; D.- Art Creation; E.- The Aesthetic Object; F.- Metaphysics of the Work of Art; G.- Style and Culture; H.- Judging Art. Second Semester. - I.- Main Aesthetic Categories; J.- Social Implications in the Experience of Art.

was the most successful and only lasted one semester, followed the approach of Dilthey's cosmovisions: naturalism, objective idealism (pantheism) and idealism of liberty (subjective idealism or personal idealism). In fact, this course was taught until shortly before Roura-Parella died. From the perspective of the different artistic cosmovisions, it examined, through 21 subjects, the different movements (or "isms") that give meaning to the history of art.

In this approach we can detect the influence of Eduard Spranger's course that Roura-Parella attended in Berlin in 1932, devoted to "The Conception of Goethe's World and his Critique in the Present". Although Spranger can be considered as his "spiritual father", Dilthey achieved the category of "spiritual grandfather". Neither can we forget that, from his study trip to Germany where he stayed two years (1930-1932), Joan Roura-Parella took a new direction in his thinking, which moved from natural sciences to human sciences. Influenced in his formative years in Madrid by the empirical tradition of experimental psychology, in Berlin he took the path of the human sciences, substituting the explanation (*Erklären*) of natural sciences with the understanding (*Verstehen*) of a hermeneutic character.

2. The Aesthetic Change of Direction: Formation as a Work of Art

Broadly speaking, Roura-Parella's intellectual journey recalls the path of the three Kantian critiques. During his youth, when he studied at the *Escuela de Estudios Superiores del Magisterio* in Madrid (1919-1923), he inclined towards knowledge of experimental sciences, so that the first scientific vision that he applied to the study of pedagogy and psychology can be classified as positive-experimental; that is, concerned with the rigour and exactitude of empirical data and verification. However, his stay in Berlin brought about a Copernican change of direction so that, upon discovering Dilthey thanks to Eduard Spranger's suggestion, he opted for human sciences. From that moment, his philosophy of education took on the features of a spiritual science that sought to understand education from a historical and culturalist perspective. Finally, and once settled in the United States, he placed himself on the horizon of the third Kantian critique which, after approaching the phenomenon (first critique) and the noumenon (second critique), chose the path of aesthetic judgement, a solution that Schiller widely developed in his *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) and which, in the end, would present artists –writers, musicians and painters– as the true educators of the people.

Hence, Joan Roura-Parella's formula is a kind of synthesis or crossroads between the idealism of liberty and aesthetic pedagogy, understood as a process through which the individual gives form to and makes up his own personal

profile, to the extent that everyone becomes his own artist. To this end, beauty becomes the condition of possibility of human formation which, in this way, transforms into a kind of work of art in the sense that everyone must form himself. So that the pedagogic action achieves a visual and aesthetic orientation, in the sense that forming oneself involves an anthropoplastic process. However, not just any form is valid but, rather, in keeping with the classical legacy, there must be a full correspondence between the inner form of the beautiful soul (*Schöne Seele*) and the outer form (presided by the order, balance and harmony of Winckelmann's neoclassical tradition), as happens with artistic creation: "The gist of beauty in art lies in the artistic form. The movement and rhythm of a musical work, for instance, is the exteriorisation of the inner movement and rhythm. It is, in short, a living expression (Klopstock) or an 'organic' rather than 'mechanical' form (A. W. Schlegel)."¹³

Out of the three moments that are united in the unity of artistic creation—experience, expression and form—only the latter is accessible to education, to the point that the pedagogic enterprise, understood as a process of self-formation (*Bildung*), goes in search of the personal form: "At root, educating means helping the individual to find his own form. Education is always self-formation. Man sees himself as the material of knowledge and the material of his own formation. Man is the sculptor of himself."¹⁴ And this to the extent that the outer form cannot be other than the expression of the inner form: "The inner form is the most important aesthetic and pedagogic category. The form is determined from within in a process that can be called organic. Only in this way does the whole life of man become a work of art; from the inner unity come external manifestations. Any other formation is false, bastard, mechanical. It does not seem easy to perceive this truth."¹⁵

An expert in languages (he spoke six) and in disciplines (he was interested in all fields of knowledge, especially pedagogy, psychology, philosophy and literature), Joan Roura-Parella combined reading, thought and writing, without forgetting the artistic manifestations that he understood thanks to his countless travels during which he visited the best museums and galleries in the world, while taking the opportunity to listen to the best orchestras, something

13 J. Roura-Parella, "Cultivo de la productividad artística". *Educación Nacional* (Mexico), 1944, p. 141.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

he already did during his study years in Madrid.¹⁶ Later, this passion for music continued in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, where he lived for seven years, between 1923 and 1930, working as a professor at the *Escuela Normal*, and in the different capitals he visited, such as Paris, London and Berlin. Thus he followed Wagner's tetralogy in Bayreuth and *The Valkyrie* –the first part of *The Ring of the Nibelung*– at the Paris Opera.¹⁷

A humanist in the spirit of the idealism of Socratic liberty, his eagerness to learn never waned. Thus, he proclaimed “I am always learning,” when he retired in June 1965, and he continued with his courses and lectures until he was 80.¹⁸ In fact, Roura-Parella did not limit himself to the study of human sciences or aesthetics as, in keeping with his cosmovision of “unity in variety,” which he inherited from Krause's thought, he maintained contacts with many of the departments and laboratories at Wesleyan University, from which he requested information in order to keep up to date with the latest bibliographical output in the diverse fields of knowledge (biology, evolution, origin of life; anthropology; psychology; psychiatry; sociology; history; philosophy of education, and so on).¹⁹ This interest in all the subjects continued beyond his retirement, when he

16 “The post-war period brought to Madrid a German opera company that staged the whole Wagnerian repertoire. A special privilege, frequent among students, whose lack of money was matched by their eagerness for new horizons, allowed me to regularly attend the Teatro Real in that winter that will be hard to erase from my memory. The orchestra conductor was the renowned maestro from Munich Otto Hess. He was the true Wagner, the Nordic, gothic man, of extraordinary vitality, of frantic passion, of an ardent lyricism.” The quotation comes from an article dated in Paris in July 1928, entitled “Wagner en francés” and which was published in the Canary Islands press. In fact, during that summer he published several articles under the generic title “Divagaciones de un hombre medio mareado”, which have been collected in the following work: E. PADORNO, “Juan Roura-Parella: Un filósofo español del exilio y su relación con Canarias”, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 53 (2007), pp. 25-54 [The quotation is from page 44].

17 “The contrast was so striking that there were moments when I could not refrain from laughing when listening to the Wagnerian heroes speak in French, and to a refined, delicate and bland orchestra, those musical tempests... Later I had a very different experience. After repeatedly attending the ‘Pelléas et Mélisande’ in Spain I listened to it again in Berlin. I remember that the person sitting next to me looked at me with marked irritation when in a youthful outburst I had to exclaim: ‘This is not Debussy!’ The same happens with Ravel... Since then I have learnt in more than one respect the problem of performing spiritual contents and, like everybody, today I know that if one paints with the blood and the soul, one also conducts an orchestra or plays any musical composition with the whole personality, inseparable from the blood and cultural group to which one belongs” [J. ROURA-PARELLA, “Cultivo de la productividad artística”. *Educación Nacional* (Mexico), 1944, p. 146].

18 J. Roura-Parella, “Retirement? Not for Juan Roura”. *Wesleyan University News*, vol. III, no. 5 (June 1965), p. 4.

19 This is not surprising if we bear in mind that Giner awoke, as Pijoan confesses, the need to see that each discipline depends on the others: “how the physiologist depends on the physicist, and

stated that “I have too many things to do,” later adding: “My associations are still here and I will continue here, only I will be in a different world. I will be free to write and do some other things I want to do.” In any case, when he retired in early summer 1965 what he wanted was a kind of sabbatical period of one or two years in order to later resume his pending intellectual projects.

Roura-Parella’s teaching, which finally evolved towards artistic issues, was highly valued by his students, for whom he always felt great affection. In this respect, he had declared: “American students are the best human material I have ever dealt with.” However, he was aware of the time limitations of students before they began to face their professional future, when they glimpsed “real life”, so that at a determined age –25 years– they became disillusioned. “This just kills the wonderful spring of their intelligence.” In any case, he always had the warm appreciation of his students, even after he retired. So much so that those who participated in the seminar “Art Style as a World View” followed the steps of the master in presenting the diverse artistic currents (the different “isms”, such as expressionism or surrealism) as true cosmovisions in essays that he sometimes kept among his papers. Neither can this artistic concern surprise us, if we bear in mind that during his stay in Berlin Roura-Parella had attended the courses on aesthetics taught by Max Dessoir, a psychologist who, along with his aesthetics studies, was interested in the potential meaning of the “beyond” in the human soul.

Hence, Roura-Parella used art as a vehicle to cross the borders of what is purely phenomenic to place himself, as artists do, in the sphere of what is hermetic and mysterious. We know that in his classes at the seminar “Art Style as a World View” he showed paintings by diverse artists –for instance, by the Catalan painter Joaquim Serra Quintana– that he used as a kind of resource to signify the different gazes that can be directed at a pictorial canvas: “There are two ways of looking at objects: one is to look at them simply and the other is to look at them attentively. In the simple gaze, the eye naturally perceives the form and appearance of the object in question. Looking at an object attentively means carefully finding, beyond the natural impression, a way of knowing the object. It can therefore be said that looking at a thing is a natural function while what we could call ‘seeing’ is a rational process.”²⁰ Taking this into account, the artist tries to make

the physicist on the mathematician, and, in his turn, the mathematician on the philosopher” [J. Pijoan (2002). *Mi Don Francisco Giner (1906-1910)*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, p. 91].

20 Joan Roura-Parella wrote these words in the programme for the exhibition of oils that the painter Joaquim Serra Quintana (1927-2003) presented at the Articolor gallery in Vic in the autumn of a year in the 1970s we have not been able to identify. He also prepared the programmes of two other exhibitions by the same painter held in Olot, both at Les Voltes gallery, from 30th January to 13th February 1971 and from 16th to 30th June 1979.

the mystery of things visible through the symbolic weight of his work which, in its turn, responds to a pantheistic cosmovision that recalls the approaches of the *Naturphilosophie*. In reference to the painting by Joaquim Serra Quintana –a representative of the Olot landscape school– in 1979 Joan Roura-Parella said the following: “The contact with Nature, which Serraquintana adores, awakens and encourages the artistic instinct that lies at the bottom of his soul. Serraquintana does not merely represent the reality he sees with his corporeal eyes, as past and current impressionists do, but rather he produces, enriches and complements his experience of natural landscape through his creative imagination.”²¹

However, at Wesleyan University he did not limit himself to teaching courses but also delivered lectures open to the general public. A few months after his arrival, in March 1947 he spoke at length about “The Understanding of Peoples” at the John Wesley Club, a text that he would later publish in Spanish, and in which, as a statement of principles, he affirmed that “Humanity without nationalism is void, while Nationality without Humanity is blind.”²² Here we can also sense the mark of the idea of “unity in variety”, a topic in modern literature since Newton, upon realising the convenience of making love for one’s own country compatible without compromising harmony in the just world order, in a line of thought that recalls the pacifist universalism of Comenius and German neo-humanism (Lessing, Krause) which emphasised the importance of the notion of Humanity.

Naturally, artistic issues occupied many of his public talks. On 8th December 1959, at the Davison Art Center, he delivered a lecture on “Goya’s Place in the Realm of Grace”. Years later, on 11th January 1965, he presented another entitled “The Baroque Spirit in Leibniz, Spinoza and Rembrandt with an Excursion to Comenius”. He even invited his friend Agustí Bartra to deliver, in spring 1950, a lecture at the Spanish Club of Wesleyan University on Whitman, Dickinson, Frost and Sandburg. Anna Murià, Agustí Bartra’s wife, comments that her husband stayed in Middletown for five days, where he walked and talked with his friend Joan Roura-Parella, thereby forging a long and enriching friendship between these two spirits, one philosophical and the other poetic, who were certainly “soul mates”. In 1968, Roura-Parella dedicated his work “La función de los símbolos en el proceso de la creación artística” (The Function of Symbols in the Artistic Creation Process) to Agustí Bartra, “a creator of poetic symbols.” Like Machado, Bartra appears in the eyes of Roura-Parella

21 This text corresponds to the last of the exhibitions mentioned in the previous note, i.e., which took place in Olot in 1979.

22 J. Roura-Parella, “Formación de la consciencia nacional”. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, XVI (January-April 1954), pp. 3-60.

as the poet who, endowed with a special gaze, can reach the essence of things beyond naturalist and impressionist manifestations. In the end, the mission of poetry does not lie in imitating a concrete reality or expressing an emotional or intellectual state but rather in “showing the profound substance of things.”

Thus, Roura-Parella acknowledges that there are, at least, two gazes; i.e., one corporeal-sensual and another intangible-essential. Consequently, artists’ language helps to see reality in a different way to that which comes from a purely empirical and visual impression because, behind painting, poetry or music there is “something else,” which must be captured not with corporeal eyes but with spiritual eyes. Here we also detect the influence of Cossío who, as López-Morillas notes,²³ took on the need to “teach children the science of seeing,” when he read this comment in an article published in the London *Times* in 1879. This is how M. B. Cossío focused his pedagogy, which has a clear aesthetic dimension, on the “art of seeing”, something that Roura-Parella also shared.

3. In Conclusion

In short, Roura-Parella found in his exile in the United States, where he lived for almost 40 years and died, that lost paradise, a kind of ideal “pedagogic province” of which, as an exile, he had always dreamt. He also saw in the American “the least conceited man of all those I have known,” while he detected in the United States the image of the group as a whole, “not of privileged classes and groups, as what matters is social integration and cooperation.”²⁴ It is logical, therefore, that he considered himself a somewhat special American, although he did not renounce his Hispanic origin. “Now,” he stated in 1965, “I am a Yankee from the Iberian Peninsula, and that is not a bad combination.”²⁵

Finally, his aesthetic vocation constitutes a pedagogic vision in the sense that the individual gives form to himself, in an ongoing process that only ends with death. This explains why he admitted, at the moment of his retirement, that he had always been learning because, in the end, he aspired to give himself a harmonious form, without stridency and dissonance, which allowed him to overcome the world of facticity to achieve a level at which he was able to see, as artists do, beyond phenomenic manifestations.

23 J. López-Morillas, “La Institución, Cossío y el arte de ver”. *Insula* 344-345 (1975), p. 18.

24 J. Roura-Parella, *Tema y variaciones de la personalidad*. *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

25 J. Roura-Parella, “Retirement? Not for Juan Roura”. *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

Let us end with some of his words that provide a synthesis of his thought that was systematised in the United States: "Without liberty, there is no life determined by the spirit and, therefore, no realization of ourselves. It is my deepest belief that the fulfilment of our mission here in this world is somehow related with our survival after death. If this were not so, although life has value in itself, I do not think it would be worth being born; at least not for me."²⁶

Programme of the course

"Art Style as a World View", taught by Joan Roura-Parella during the second semester of 1976 at Wesleyan University.

Introduction. Forming power of an aesthetic experience: The work of Art. Moments in the creative process: impression, expression and form. Structure of the work of Art. Its effect on the beholder.

I.- Style. Forces conditioning Style.- National, epochal and personal style.- Geography of Art.- Classification of the style.

II.- What is a world view (Weltanschauung).- Origin of the word Weltanschauung. The sense of the word. Psychological conditions of a world view (Jaspers). Types of Weltanschauung (Dilthey).

1. Naturalism
2. Objective idealism or pantheism
3. Subjective idealism or personal idealism
4. Expression of the world view in Art (Hermann Nohl)

III.- Philosophy as world view (Spranger). Fundamental metaphysical problem: Who is the being? Who does exist? What does exist?

IV.- Pertinent pre-Socratic answers:

Pythagoras: mathematics in Nature and Art. Heraclitus metaphysics.

Influence on Bergson's "La pensée et le mouvant".- Movement in Art.

The Eleatic philosophers: Zeno and Parmenides. Static qualities in Art.

Parmenides *Mundus sensibilis* and *Mundus intelligibilis*. Being and appearance.

Qualities of being: unique, eternal, immutable, unlimited, immoveable.

V.- Influence of Parmenides and Socrates on Plato.

Plato's Weltanschauung: ethical, logical and aesthetic motives.- Plato theory of the ideas. Realism of the ideas. The idea of Goodness and the idea of Beauty. Platonism in history.

VI.- Classic Art in Greece.- Ideal beauty in plastic Art and painting.- Praxiteles and the Parthenon. Classic Art in the Renaissance.- Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael.- Beauty and the sublime. Neo-classicism: David, Ingres; Picasso as a classicist.

VII.- The aesthetic of the spirit.- Fra Angelico and Perugino.

VIII.- Subjective idealism of Michelangelo, Matthias Grünewald and Dürer.

IX.- Aristotle's metaphysics. What does exist according to Aristotle? Aristotle's criticism of Plato's realism of the Ideas.- Aristotle's realism; substance: matter and form. Aristotle's influence over the course of the centuries. St. Thomas Aquina's idea of beauty. Cardinal Mercier, Maritain, Zaragüeta.

X.- Realism in Art.- The concept of mimesis.

1. Italian realism: Caravaggio.
2. French realists: Courbet, Millet, Manet, Degas, Meissonier and others.
3. Spanish realism: psychological realism of Velázquez and Goya.- Velázquez humor; Zurbaran and others.
4. German realism: Leibl, Alt, Thoma.
5. Realism in the United States: Homer. Eakins, Wyeth, Hopper and Samuel Green. Social realism.

XI.- Descartes' idealism. Crisis of the Aristotelian philosophy. Descartes' criticism of Aristotle: his opposed view. Reality as a problem. Who does exist in Descartes' Metaphysics: The thinking I or the thinking substance (Cogito ergo sum), God and the extension (l'étendue). The geometry of reality of the world.

XII.- Emotional expressionism: Kandinsky, Rouault, Van Gogh, Munch, Orozco and others. Intellectual expression: Blake, Gris, Picasso. Relationship between Picasso and Husserl (Ortega). From Picasso to abstract art. The geometric: abstract Art of Mondrian.

XIII.- Objective idealism.- Leibniz and the form Language of the Baroque. Leibniz perspectivism and Picasso's cubism.

XIV.- Aesthetic world view. From aesthetic monism to pantheism; essence of pantheism.

XV.- Spinoza's rational, mystic pantheism. Rembrandt and Spinoza. The pantheistic from language of Corot, Turner and Böcklin landscapes.- Pantheistic impressionism.

XVI.- Mystic attitude. Kinds of mysticism.- The mystic form language of El Greco.

XVII.- From Baroque to Rococo. The century (XVIII) of the woman. The dissolution of the spirit. Nature as an ideal of liberation.

XVIII.- Naturalism. The aesthetic of the senses, or hedonistic art: Pompeii's paintings, French peinture galante of the XVIII Century, Toulouse Lautrec's and Picasso's erotic art.

XIX.- Weltanschauung structure of Kant. Kant's transcendental aesthetics and Cézanne.

XX.- Heidegger and Gabriel Marcel search for being: anguish and hope. The theme of Death in Art.

XXI.- Fight and change of the world views. Competition and change of art styles. The pluralities of Beauties.