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Rodolf Llorens i Jordana (1910-1985). *Servidumbre y grandeza de la filosofía.* Leonard Muntaner Editor, Palma, Mallorca, 2010. 188 p. ISBN: 978-84-15076-11-7

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War leaves in its wake some ruins that are intangible. Books and philosophers, too, can lie hidden by the smoke. European philosophy recalls the names of those such as Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Carl Einstein (1885-1940) and Wilhelm Friedmann (1884-1942), three Jewish intellectuals who committed suicide at the beginning of the Second World War and whom, on one or other side of the Spanish border, death has united in a lasting brotherhood. Catalonia, too, has its roll call of exiled philosophers and silenced thinkers bearing witness to the brutality of the 20th century. Thinkers such as Jaume Serra Húnter (1878-1943) and Joaquim Xirau (1895-1946) form part of a tragic tale of uprooting caused by a brand of fascism that, with regard to Catalonia, acted with decidedly genocidal zeal.

Although the dead can sometimes be buried with honours, it is more difficult to weigh up the role of younger exiles, those university graduates whose career was not yet established and whom the war and post-war meanness kept away from the university world forever. European culture also has a long list of academics without a university, such as Günter Anders (1902-1992). The author of *Servidumbre y grandeza de la filosofía* (Servitude and Greatness of Philosophy), Rodolf Llorens i Jordana (Vilafranca del Penedès, 1910 – Caracas, 1985), is the person who, in the field of Catalan thought, can be said to best fit this tradition of radical, interrupted thought, conceived under emergency conditions, perhaps of lesser importance but undoubtedly tragic in nature.

Llorens i Jordana was a junior member of the so-called “Barcelona School”, a group of philosophers more or less close to Max Scheler’s phenomenology. It was destroyed by the Spanish Civil War but, paradoxically, produced its best work in Mexico. It should be remembered that Catalan philosophical

thought developed primarily through newspapers and journals, as Spanish universities at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were strictly dominated by a Catholic Church infused with an inflexible and anachronistic scholasticism. Furthermore, access to their full professorship was controlled by a radically centralist university bureaucracy based out of Madrid that systematically blocked the promotion of any academic suspected of Catalan nationalism.

The Catalan philosophical tradition thus went through a highly precarious period, isolated from the rest of Europe almost until the years directly following the First World War, when Bertrand Russell's visit to Barcelona in 1920 and Joaquim Xirau's stay in England (1929) symbolically marked its linking up with the new styles of thought. The two academic years (1934-1935 and 1935-1936) of teaching at the University of Barcelona by Husserl's Jewish disciple Paul-Ludwig Landsberg (1901-1944), who died in tragic circumstances, were another key factor in the shaping of a humanist, modernising ethos that has for years characterised, even under dictatorship or in exile, the best of Catalan philosophical thought.

If it had not been for the civil war, Rudolf Llorens would have been one of the first "normal" philosophers in a complex country with little intellectual tradition, yet one which was striving to leave behind its "minor" status, one typical of those countries unable to experience, or at least culminate (like Catalonia) the process of the Enlightenment. Llorens was typical of the radicalised academics of the 1930s whose life was tragically destroyed by the Civil War and unending exile and who would, in other circumstances, have formed part of the affluent intelligentsia. Editor of left-wing, Catalan nationalist magazines, film critic and even clandestine traveller to the USSR in 1934, where he met with Dimitrov and Molotov, amongst other Soviet leaders, Llorens, on the flap of the first edition of *Servidumbre y grandeza de la filosofía* (1949), was portrayed as: *Another example of those academics of the old continent whose destiny, which appeared linked to the fecund placidity of the lecture room and the library, was suddenly cut short –due to war– and replaced by the hazardous life of the soldier and the misery of the concentration camp.*

Llorens, exiled in Venezuela, helped form the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Caracas (which was a Catalan redoubt for years) but was forced to earn a living as a screenwriter and film producer, dividing his time between Mexico and Venezuela. Franco's death and the end of exile arrived when he was already too old. Despite some tributes in his country of birth, he died, less read than he should have been, in Venezuela in 1985. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in his work in Catalonia, and it may just be that he will be a more important author to younger generations.