

## ■ reviews

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# Eugenio d'Ors, *The science of culture*. Edited by Antonio Lastra and Jaime Nubiola, Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2011. 541p.

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The science of culture is one of the main works to know the thinking of Eugenio d'Ors (1881-1954). Published posthumously in 1964 by the publishing company Rialp in Madrid, this new edition, prepared by Antonio Lastra and Jaime Nubiola, textually revised by Andreu Moreno Giménez, includes as a novelty an unpublished preface by the author.

The origin of the work is diverse: it was conceded of between 1925 and 1935, taken from Eugenio d'Ors' lectures at the Social School of Madrid, on the lessons in 1933 in the Luis Vives Chair of the University of Valencia, the lessons given at the Ateneo in Cádiz, from university courses in Santander and abstracts presented in societies of philosophy and elsewhere. It maintains the lesson format—specifically, eighteen lessons—but as regards the whole, the author has sought to go beyond the written statement of a *course*, turning it into a *treatise*. The book is organized into four parts: *Preliminaries*, *Systematic about Culture*, *Morphology of Culture* and *History of culture*.

He devotes the first three lessons, grouped under the general title of *Preliminaries*, epistemological considerations about the science of culture. Eugenio d'Ors shows the crisis of History, that has gone from being considered the centre and the model of the humanities to be protested as to its foundations and supposed objectivity. The weakness of History lies in the fact of having remained in the area of what is “phenomenal,” “empirical,” that is, in the context of what is relative. Moreover, against exaggerated plans of positivists, science has been the subject of criticism denied by representatives of probabilism and indeterminism. Fortunately, the pragmatism of H. Poincaré has allowed a claim of science on condition that it emphasises its limitations: it cannot fully understand reality nor present an entirely appropriate picture. Science must give up on replacing philosophy and religion. Consequently, similar to the natural sciences,

which capture the concrete in the form of species, varieties, genders, classes and types, a science of culture should consist of a “meta-history” in which, along with the flow of historical facts, “stable elements, fixed, perennials; some elements, even if they do not understand the historical reality, [...] are inserted into it and preside over the course of its evolution.”

Eugenid’Ors considers these elements as stable in what he calls, inspired by Alexandrian Neoplatonism, eons. The whole section on *Systematics of Culture* is based on this concept. He defines it as “an idea that has a biography”, and distinguishes two classes, pure and mixed. The first is coextensive with humanity, the second, however, it is possible to imagine that humanity survives to it. For example, the eon of the race is historically may be left behind if the merger between humans reaches a point where racial differences disappear, however, is beyond the disappearance of the male and female eons without loss of humanity itself. The work develops especially female and male eons, classical and baroque, Rome and Babel, exoter and ecumen, and mixed.

If we see them synthetically, they characterize womanhood, suggested by Goethe’s *Enig-Weibliche*, through love, and manhood, for work. He makes a long dissertation about the Baroque, from philosophical and methodological discussions with specialists in art history that took place at Pontigny Abbey. The content descriptions and discussions of this meeting serve to clarify the notion of Eon. In this dissertation, that recalls Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the Eon is associated with classic logos, while the Baroque is associated with Pan. Rome is an expression of humanity, while Babel, abbreviation for the “Tower of Babel” is, on the contrary, the expression of their dispersion and separation. The ecumen Eon, a term that relates to “ecumenical,” indicates a center and a periphery, subject to the rules emanating from the centre (the whole of centre and periphery will constitute *a cosmos*) and the exoter, related with exotic, is what is outside the ecumen. Finally, mixed eons relate with race and war.

The central position occupied by eons in the *Systematic of culture*, in the *Morphology of the culture*, the third part of the book, is occupied by styles. Our author distinguishes between “cultural styles” and “historical styles”. The first are not limited to one place or time, but occurs independently of a local or temporary assignment, in this sense, he refuses to recognize the existence of a *French, Spanish and Flemish* school of painting. He does not consider other spiritual products as belonging to one nation or another, nor accept a certain time limit of a “cultural style” as Classicism. The “historic styles” as Gothic, however, are restricted by time and space, and can only be imitated in the form of a literal repetition. Moreover styles, *Morphology of culture* is about the way in which culture is presented in the fields of know, prefer and do. So Ors defines a *Kennenkultur*, a culture of knowledge, a *Werterkultur*, a culture of values, and a *Machenkultur*, a work culture.

The book ends with a *History of the culture* that give details about two of its four “epiphanies” announced in the work planned, the epiphany of man and society, but it does not develop that of the State or People, that will constitute his continuation. He associates the epiphany of the man with the Greco-Roman Antiquity. This epiphany comes from the efforts of philosophers and sculptors that define man as composed of body and soul. With the epiphany of man, humanity comes into culture. The epiphany of the society, which has its origin in *The City of God* of St. Augustine takes place in the Middle Ages. D’Ors considers that this part of mankind, characterized by feudalism, is subject to the eon of Babel.

The presentation of the book, *The Science of Culture* has been rightly considered by Professor Antonio Lastra as a precedent for contemporary *Cultural Studies*, which promotes the magazine through the magazine the *Viceroy Tower*. We add our claim in favour of a significant role that he played in the intellectual history of philosophy. Written in a brilliant language by a master of the word, it is an unpublished broad systematization from a cultural perspective, full of meticulously detailed analysis, suggestive or revealing. As much as a precursor, it is surely a work for the future.

Translation from Catalan by Josep Monserrat and Gloria Farell