

Xavier Serra, *Història Social de la Filosofia Catalana. La Lògica (1900-1980)*  
(A Social History of Catalan Philosophy:  
Logic [1900-1980]), Valencia: Afers 2010

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Seeking the key to the failure and stagnation of philosophical thought in Catalonia, Xavier Serra aims to investigate, in the period object of this study, the reception given to mathematical logic in its university world. Serra's discourse, oft-repeated and critical of skulduggery of said world, is the result of his research into this question –one that is apparently anodyne, but that is shown to be key to explaining Catalonia's philosophical past and present. Here, it provides piercing insight into this world, whilst tracing the careers of those in the field of philosophy connected with university chairs in Logic, and takes as its starting point the new curricula implemented in 1900 by García Alix. The condemnatory tone is already evident with regard to that new but poorly implemented legal framework for teaching, according to the incipient European currents of thought, where the dead weight of some of those intellectuals occupying departmental chairs, far from creating a school of thought, would merely anchor them to the protection of other interests or the refuge of recalcitrant and imperemptory metaphysics.

The conversion of some metaphysicians into logicians is unconvincing. How can Josep Daurella, the author of works on metaphysics, be so lazy as to produce his “anachronistic” and “useless” *Apuntes de Lògica Fundamental* (Notes on Fundamental Logic)? Also, how can the first, fascinating works of Crexells on Bertrand Russell, published in Catalan, which stand out from the disfigured Orsian background, be ignored in the later work of Garcia Bacca? How can this neo-Thomist show concern, based on stays in Germany and “by coincidence”, for the bases of mathematical logic at the hands of Hilbert and Ackermann's *Grundzüge*? What dissemination and what reception were given

by the intellectual world to the first writings on mathematical logic stemming from the isolated and tardy studies of Miquel Soy? What sleight of hand was used by Joaquim Xirau to promote logic from his chair whilst still propounding Kant? What was going on in the foreign university world to make people like Garcia Bacca, Ferrater Mora or Manuel Sacristán find logic there and make it the driving force behind their research? What ideological backstory is there to the judgements made on the validity of an applicant for a chair? What was the story behind the waxing and waning of the short history –“school”– supported by the chairs of the University of Valencia and the symposia and publications favoured by Manuel Garrido?

Within the Catalan philosophical world, the reception given to mathematical logic would always arrive late and play a subordinate role. This would be the same of the autodidact, the systematic or rigorous and also of the exiled or marginalised scholar. In this confluence, logic lost its identity and became merely a tool to modulate or condition thought. The microscope under which Xavier Serra examines some of the names object of his study seeks to reveal how they decide to welcome this new paradigm in the field of philosophy. The result is a work that is exhaustive in its gathering of data and telling anecdotes, where the precise use of adjectives becomes a highly graphical, cutting tool set within an approachable narrative that gives value to that which it explains. In short, it is a question of choosing the path of social analysis or of the relationship between tradition and a modernity that is never welcome here, the path of those who fail to benefit from the “riches” that a university-based “school” could have offered them. Out of this, then, comes a study by way of a portrait of the history of Catalan philosophy, taking as its central theme the appearance of logic; a portrait that is, at the same time, an analysis of the causes of our own academic and intellectual situation.