Lines of Research of Manuel F. Lorenzo (University of Oviedo)

His academic activity of philosophical investigation has been focused on themes related to the Philosophy of German Idealism, specially with that of the last Schelling, and on the proposal of a new foundation of Philosophy illuminated by the new operational conception of knowledge developed by Jean Piaget in his Genetic Epistemology and continued in a deep and innovative way by the Spanish philosopher Gustavo Bueno (http://www.fgbueno.es/ing/gbm.htm), specially regarding scientific knowledge, in his Teoría del Cierre Categorial.

With such a proposal of philosophical renovation, which its author named Pensamiento Hábil (on the occasion of his participation in conferences about the Weak Thought (Pensiero Debole) of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, which took place at the University of Oviedo in 1995), it is intended to give expression to a new philosophy that focuses its reflection on the thesis attributed to Anaxagoras that “intelligence comes from the hands”. Such a thesis has not found until the appearance of Evolutionary Paleo-anthropology and Piagetian Evolutionary Psychology a positive scientific confirmation on which it could establish a philosophical reflection around the role of corporal activities in general, and specially of manual activities, in the development of the comprehension and the rational dominion of the world. This demands, thus, a new philosophical interpretation of human rationality as been originally, in a transcendental and decisive way for the own human existence, operatory bodily ability. For this reason the author has named this new philosophy as “Pensamiento Hábil” (“Skillfull Thinking” or “Ability’s Thinking”) and, in other occasions, as “philosophy of the hands” or “philosophy of manual reason”.

The return to Anaxagoras, a Greek Pre-Socratic philosopher, must be valued in the sense of overcoming the “forgetfulness of being” that Heidegger attributes to the Western Metaphysic, trying to build a new sense for a future ontology or metaphysic related to this “forgetfulness of the hand” in the traditional conception of knowledge. An extremely valuable standing point is provided by Heidegger himself with his proposal of starting, in his ontology of human existence, from the “ready-to-hand being” (Zuhandensein) and not from the “present-at-hand being” (Vorhandensein), with the aim of finding a new sense of Being which would allow us to overcome the Idealism of the Modern Metaphysic. However, the author thinks that the insufficiency of Heidegger’s brilliant and famous analysis (which took him to consider his most important work, Being and Time, as an unfinished project) resides in the limitations of the Husserlian Phenomenological Method to build systematically a new philosophy. For, just as Brentano's Phenomenological Psychology opened at its time in the philosophical domain a path for the phenomenological method, the author thinks that Piaget’s Operational Psychology opens in the second half of the 20th century the possibility of developing a new philosophical method, which could be named with a new word, being faithful though to the Piagetian spirit, as operatological method. This method, not being merely descriptive, but decidedly constructive and reconstructive, gives the possibility of building new philosophical systematizations based on more solid foundations and which are more rooted in reality than traditional foundations. It allows to develop, facing the Phenomenological Positivism, an Operatological Positivism.

Positivism, under the last form of the Anglo-Saxon Analytic Philosophy, is going today through a strong crisis, suffering from fatal symptoms of creative exhaustion such as
scholasticism, triviality and lack of interest of their discussions for a general public, specialism in regional philosophical issues (language, the “mind”), lethal for authentic philosophy, although not so much for sciences, etc. This crisis runs parallel to the one suffered by Marxist philosophy after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the USA, main bastion during the Cold War and still today of positivist philosophy, this is leading to the search for a new replacement philosophy which will allow them to remain the world forerunners in philosophy, as it happened in the second half of the past century. This can be clearly seen in the work of its most famous intellectual at the present moment, George Lakoff, disciple, critic and successor of the great Chomsky, when he proposes in his book *Philosophy of the Flesh* (1999), written in collaboration with M. Johnson, a return to a Phenomenological Positivism inspired in Merleau-Ponty's Husserl.

A Phenomenological Positivism inspired in the last Husserl of the “life world” (*Lebenswelt*) and which looks for the genesis of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980) in the rationality embedded in the human bodies, in the “flesh” of their neuronal circuits that coordinate in a logical way the movements and actions of the subject. Such North American scientific-philosophical movement, of which Lakoff himself forms part, is wider and includes neurophysiologists such as Antonio Damasio, G. Edelman, biologists like G. Bateson, H. Maturana, F. Valera, E. Rosch or E. Thompson, experts in Robotics like R. Brooks, H. Moravec, philosophers such as A. Clark, H. Hendriks-Jansen, Shaun Gallagher or the Danish Dan Zahavi, etc. (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embodied_philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embodied_philosophy)). This movement, as well as having strictly philosophical roots in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, also points out Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset and Heidegger as illustrious predecessors of the basic approaches of the thesis of the “embodiment”.

In this sense, the proposal of a renewal of the philosophy that the author names Pensamiento Hábil (see Manuel F. Lorenzo, *Introducción al Pensamiento Hábil* (2007), *Principios Filosóficos del Pensamiento Hábil* (2009) and *Del Yo al Cuerpo* (2011)) inserts itself in and converges with the already mentioned positivistic movement in its most basic aspects, although putting more emphasis on strictly philosophical issues. Not only because of the interest shown by the author in rescuing, for the philosophical renewal, the proposal of a Positive Philosophy made by the old Schelling against the Negative Philosophy of his rival and contemporary philosopher, Hegel, (see Manuel F. Lorenzo, *La última orilla. Introducción a la Spätphilosophie de Schelling*, 1989) but also to rescue philosophical approaches which appeared to be out of date, as the Ratio-vitalism of Ortega or Heidegger's most pragmatic aspects related to his Idea of the “ready-to-hand being”.

Nevertheless, we would put a difference, more in degree than substantial, in the greater importance that the author gives to the figure of a predecessor of the “embodiment” thesis like Jean Piaget. For, in the USA, the influence of the Swiss psychologist has been greater in the area of Pedagogy than in the properly psychological area, partly due to the weight and greater prestige of the Behavioral Psychology like Skinner’s. In Spain, the influence of Piaget has been very big, both among pedagogues and psychologist, and for this reason the starting point of the Pensamiento Hábil necessarily remits to his innovative work. Furthermore, Piaget must not be considered as a mere psychologist, but as somebody who initiated a ambitious project of a new general explanation of knowledge, named Genetic Epistemology, who’s frontiers move between science and philosophy. Being a connoisseur of classic philosophical tradition, although he believed
that he could overcome it to step on purely scientific grounds by approaching again the foundations of human knowledge, he actually could not escape basic philosophical assumptions as the thesis that knowledge derives not so much from the mere sensations as from the actions of the individuals, thesis which was articulated in a modern way by Fichte. For this reason it is partly accepted his rejection of the purely speculative philosophy but not of positive philosophy, which regards unavoidable to assume the necessarily partial results of the cognitive sciences as the positive starting point from which a more general, properly philosophical, reflection can begin.

A philosophy, in the positivistic tradition inaugurated by Comte, must develop, as well as a general explanation of knowledge, a particular explanation of scientific knowledge following the different classes of sciences. In this area, however, Piaget didn't go beyond the organization of congresses and interdisciplinary reunions, not achieving a finished theorization of scientific knowledge. But Piaget, in Spain, had a stronger influence, maybe stronger than in other countries, in the field of the most strictly philosophical creation. As a proof of this the author remits to the work of Gustavo Bueno, who, in his Teoría del Cierre Categorial (1992-93) develops a theory of science in which an essential importance is given to the corporal operations of scientists in the construction of the theorems in which scientific laws are condensed. Such a conception incorporates essential aspects of Piaget’s work, without which it wouldn't have been possible to develop. But, at the same time, by mixing them with ontological components closer to the Marxist materialist tradition, the philosophical work of Bueno places itself in a position that, for a positivistic mentality, is suspicious of relapsing into a sort of scholastic “metaphysic”. Hence, from the proposal of a new positive philosophy like the one that makes its way in the “embodied philosophy”, the Pensamiento Hábil proposed must insert the brilliant achievements of Piagetian Genetic Epistemology as well as Bueno's Teoría del Cierre Categorial, in a new philosophical foundation able to correct at the same time one's defect of “scientism” and the other's mistake of “the metaphysic”.

In such a sense it has been proposed a operatological positive philosophy as one that overcomes Husserl's Phenomenological Positivism and, at the same time, as an open way to achieve new and promising philosophical results. Such a new philosophical foundation is substantiated by the proposal of a new way of understanding human rationality as being, originally and constitutively, manual rationality. For her, “thinking” is something analogous to “maneuvering”, being the foundation of this new philosophy what the author calls Manual Reason (Razón Manual), that must be put in relation with the contemporary Spanish philosophical tradition which starts with the Unamunian proposal of relating, against Descartes, the conscience or the human I with the existing one of “flesh and blood”, continued by Ortega by connecting the I with the “circumstances”, in the sense of indissolubly linking the noumenal with the phenomenal, understanding human reason as Vital Reason (Razón Vital). Currently, the Spanish philosopher Eugenio Trías (eugeniotrias.com) has brilliantly gone deeper into this new Spanish foundation of philosophy with his consideration of the Limit itself given between the noumenal and the phenomenal, between the orteguián I and the circumstances, as a territory or positive foundation and not merely as a line, coining its corresponding term of Razón Fronteriza (Frontier Reason). The Pensamiento Hábil pretends to incorporate itself to this philosophical tendency by understanding the human hands, insofar as they are extremities, as a bordering rationality (racionalidad fronteriza, Trías) and vital (Ortega), as the I's bordering organ, now understood as an operatorial corporal subject (Piaget), which interposes between the noumenal I and the phenomenal
world. Likewise, facing Trias' method that we would call “fenomenológico figurativo” (figurative phenomenological), recognizable in his brilliant analysis of The Large Glass of Duchamp (Los límites del mundo, Ariel, Barcelona, 1985, p. 236) or of what the concept of “limes” or frontier meant to the Romans (Lógica del Límite, Destino, Barcelona, 1991, p. 15), the author proposes an operatological method (see articles: “Fenomenología y Operatología”, I-II).

http://www.manuelflorenzo.webs tl