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ANDRÉS BELLO

(1781-1865)

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Andrés Bello, an exemplary figure in the history of Latin American culture, was one of its most outstanding educators in the nineteenth century and is generally acknowledged to be its greatest humanist. His robust personality and austere, scholarly way of life made him the embodiment of the *maestro*, a Spanish term signifying a person of outstanding merit who is recognized as a supreme example worthy of the highest honours. Andrés Bello epitomized all these qualities: his wide-ranging activities, whose effects have been long-lasting, show his concern both for primary education and particularly higher education, in addition to his work as a grammarian, jurist, philosopher and politician. He was born in Venezuela, but the course of events in Latin America in the early decades of the last century caused him to stay for nearly twenty years in London, from whence he went to Chile. His extensive work and lasting influence have given him international stature and the rare distinction of being a figure to whom all Spanish-speakers lay claim. So great is his authority that even international educational and cultural agreements bear his name.

His life in Venezuela

Andrés Bello was born in Caracas on 29 November 1781. His childhood and youth were spent in relatively comfortable and cultivated surroundings in which, from an early age, he took pleasure in reading. His studies brought him into contact first with French and later English. His formal education was marked by the award on 9 May 1800 of the degree of Bachelor of Arts. But other information relating to that time is perhaps even more significant. A few months earlier he made the acquaintance of a foreigner whose presence in the city had an enormous impact and made an indelible impression on the still young and timid student who approached him. This was Alexander von Humboldt, already renowned for his outstanding work as a naturalist, and above all for the vast range of his scientific inquiries.

To eke out his slender income Bello began tutoring in his own home for a group of adolescents which included Simón Bolívar, who was destined to scale the heights of history. Decades later the scene was to be repeated in Santiago de Chile, when he imparted his knowledge from a desk laden with books on every imaginable subject to other equally inquiring young people, a small band of whom were to assume their place in history. From the testimony of his students over the years we know of his extraordinary educational and human gifts.

Very soon, he improved his financial situation by joining the staff of the colonial administration, where even as a new recruit his hard work, initiative and knowledge of languages made him invaluable for translating the at times alarming news arriving from Europe. Events in the Old World were beginning to impinge on the New, and the most important information was not always conveyed in Spanish, which seems to have been the only language generally understood. During this period his

intellectual interests were coming to the fore, and he began writing for the Caracas *Gazeta*, the first newspaper of his native city. Vigorous articles were even at that early stage associating the name of Bello with the first production ventures of the local press. He was the author of the booklet entitled *Calendario manual y guía universal de forastero en Venezuela para el año de 1810* and also of the *Resumen de historia de Venezuela*, in which Mariano Picón Salas discerns traces of Humboldt's ideas.

Bello's first poetic outpourings also date from that time. E. Rodríguez Monegal notes in the poetry of the Caracas period 'the mastery and ease with which the young poet handles the neoclassical style; his application of the humanistic vision of the eighteenth century to the American world, a vision already partaking of a continental view; and in certain passages, unmistakable signs of the direct contemplation of nature, expressed in neoclassical style but with genuine American feeling'. We have here the burgeoning work of the man of letters who throughout his life was to contribute so much to the intellectual emancipation of Latin America—an aspect whose paramount importance cannot be overemphasized.

His duties, experience, background and, as we have said, knowledge of languages, ideally suited him to take part in the mission that the conservative *junta* was sending to London for negotiations, the delegates being Simón Bolívar and Luis López Méndez. A long-standing friendship, despite occasional setbacks, was to link him to his pupil Bolívar. In a letter from Quito dated 27 April 1829, Bolívar wrote to José Fernández Madrid, then in London, expressing his serious concern at: 'the wretched financial situation of the legation, which is forcing my worthy friend Bello to leave it to avoid starving. [...] Try to persuade Bello that what is least evil in America is Colombia, and that if he wants to be employed in this country, let him say so and he will be given a good position. His native region should come before everything; and he is worthy of occupying a very important post in it. I know the superior nature of this contemporary of mine from Caracas. He was my teacher, though we were the same age, and I loved and respected him. While his aloofness has kept us apart to some extent, I wish to be reconciled with him and to win him over for Colombia.' The message was sent too late, however, for Bello had already left London for Chile.

Among all the influencing factors of the time, I have sought to focus here only on his relationships with Humboldt and Bolívar, owing to the significant influence they were to exert on his life.

To complete this biographical sketch I refer in advance to considerations which will be examined later in greater detail, by alluding to two traits of Bello's personality that are not always fully understood. The first is his humanism which, contrary to general belief, has nothing to do with the 'arid scholarship' of the seventeenth century, caught up in Latin of all types and periods and encumbered by imperfectly mastered Greek. The second trait is the conservatism for which he has also been criticized.

To clarify the question of humanism we need go no further than the simple and striking description by Angel Rosenblat: 'Andrés Bello was without doubt the first humanist of our America, a kind of Hispano-American Goethe, at a time when humanism was still the father of science and the humanist was not only philosopher but also historian and poet, jurist and grammarian, and sought to encompass both spiritual life and the mysteries of nature. To this we may add that Bello was a humanist in the history of his era.

The conservative yet modernizing thought of Bello—poles apart from any idea of traditionalism or opposition to progress—indisputably owes much to his impressions of life in the United Kingdom as compared with events in the Latin-American Continent. During his long stay in London, he witnessed a gigantic effort of institutional readjustment to the profound economic and social changes brought about by the agricultural and industrial revolution, which in turn emphasized the importance of science and technology in building the future. Furthermore, he was necessarily much

concerned at the role played by Great Britain in the new precarious balance of international relations, which also had its effect on the course of events in the New World.

Constantly concerned with the destiny of Latin America, torn apart and impoverished by prolonged civil wars that were beginning to threaten its very survival, Bello must have seen the unique British experiment as providing a possible formula for new states to channel teeming energies and harness them to their own interests. It was therefore his view that the aim should not be to overthrow an order which was threatened but rather to restore it as soon as possible, making use of education, legislation and trade as the best instruments for that purpose. His ideas were of course not always shared by many of his contemporaries, who opposed him fiercely yet respectfully. What was at issue were different philosophies of history and life. The subsequent course of events made it self-evident, however, that his contribution can be deemed to have been of exceptional value. In any case, we do not believe that these were the decisive factors in making him famous; his fame stems deservedly from his natural genius, and is founded upon his vast and enduring written work and his personal prestige and influence.

His life in England

When he landed at Portsmouth on 11 July 1810, Andrés Bello, who came, as we have just seen, as an attaché with the mission headed by Simón Bolívar and Luis López Méndez, could never have imagined that circumstances would force him to remain in Great Britain for nearly two decades, a period marked by discouragement and financial hardship but also filled with stimuli for the maturing of his talent. Vicente Llorens Castillo, in *Liberales y románticos: una emigración española en Inglaterra*, provides a well-documented account of the life of the liberal émigrés from the Iberian peninsula at that time, who were condemned to long years of ‘poverty and obscurity, hopes and disappointments’. This was also certainly true of the many Latin Americans who, like Bello, faced a similar situation, their ties with their native land severed by fate, without resources and submerged by an uncertain future that was to be made even more threatening by the constitution of restoration movements. However, from the intellectual point of view—setting aside the suspicions which undermined any community feeling among all those uprooted persons—the climate proved stimulating and fertile for those who were willing, and sufficiently humble, to undergo a difficult political and cultural learning process in another environment and another language. The number of gifted and important people in that situation was becoming considerable, and Bello was to establish lasting ties with many of them, as is borne out by numerous direct or indirect testimonies that have come down to us. He came to know Francisco de Miranda, José de San Martín, José María Blanco White, Bartolomé José Gallardo, Antonio José de Irisarri, Servando Teresa de Mier, José Joaquín de Olmedo, Vicente Rocafuerte and a great many others the mere mention of whose names is highly evocative.

In the publication *Cartas a Bello en Londres. 1810-1829*, by Sergio Fernández Larraín, there are some interesting and at times moving testimonies from that period. We also know of Bello’s relations with James Mill, who at one point was able to help Bello financially by entrusting him with the difficult task of deciphering the manuscripts of Bentham. The homesick Bello was certainly not able to subsist on the meagre and very irregular payments he received as secretary to some Latin American diplomatic missions or as a subsidy from particular countries (for example, the Argentine Government sent him £150 on one occasion with a promise to repeat the payment annually, which subsequent events prevented it from keeping). He eked out his scant income with private lessons or editing work (he once revised a Spanish version of the Bible), but the sum of his resources barely provided him with the decencies of life.

In any case, he lived with intensity a very special time in the transformation of the Old World, and above all of Great Britain. In the brief space available it is only possible to list summarily a number of factors, protagonists and events of varying importance which coincided with Bello's stay in London. These included news of the fluctuating fortunes of the emancipation movement in Latin America, declarations of independence, restorations, the Battle of Ayacucho, the Congress of Panamá and the recognition of some countries by the United States. In Europe there were the Congress of Vienna, romanticism, and more particularly in Great Britain, whose population had then topped the twenty million mark, there was the production of eight million tons of coal per year and a merchant fleet of some 2.5 million tons which already included steamships. The metallurgical and textile industries were expanding at an unprecedented rate; and the industrialization process necessarily began to extend to the press. Within a few years there was a spate of daily newspapers and reviews with increased print runs and lower prices, such as *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Evening Standard* and the *Westminster Review*. London became the first city of over a million inhabitants, and from 1812 onwards astonished Londoners and foreigners alike saw its streets become safer thoroughfares as a result of that marvel of marvels - gas lighting. Authors, ideas and books were discussed; Humboldt, the young genius whom Bello had known in Caracas, Goethe, Byron, Shelley, Malthus and Ricardo were news; the issues of authority, democracy and liberalism were debated; news from the Continent suggested that the principle of nationality was prevailing over that of legitimacy.

Despite the difficulties involved, and without disregarding the events great and small taking place around him, Bello set to work single-handed or with a few assistants on lofty cultural undertakings which have left a lasting mark. With Juan García del Río he produced the *Biblioteca Americana* (1823), which constituted, in the words of Rafael Caldera in the Foreword to the facsimile reprint used by the present author, 'the first and most ambitious "eminently American" cultural work ever embarked upon from Europe'. Brought out by a small group of people educated in the New World, it was intended for all the peoples of America with the aim of contributing to 'dissemination of the true and sound benefits arising from enlightenment and rational freedom'. A quick perusal suffices to establish the broad spectrum of the concerns of its valiant editors: literature, the arts, science, techniques, historical material, and so forth, and the words we have cited are an adequate reflection of the spirit underlying an enterprise that was little short of heroic. The first installment was headed by the 'Alocución a la poesía' (Address to Poetry), by Bello himself, which features today in all anthologies. A variety of other articles included 'El repertorio americano' (The American Directory) of 1826-27. One notes with admiration that, despite the struggle to earn his living, Bello was always willing to give much of his time to activities directly or indirectly connected with the intellectual emancipation of the New World. Against this background, and this is perhaps one of his outstanding traits, he lived with intensity in an atmosphere of ferment in which ideas and initiatives germinated, and investigations and discoveries were disseminated. Here he formed his personality, accumulated an impressive stock of knowledge, improved his methods, sharpened his sensibility, discovered, prepared and dreamt. Possessing a profound interior life, he felt that he was gradually building up an innermost store of wisdom, at once vigorous and refined, on which he might one day draw in the service of his country.

A brief reference to some of the many components of his substantial culture should include his interest in English empirical and utilitarian thought: also in the radicalism that he came to know during his long stay by the banks of the Thames, not only through his frequent visits as an avid reader to the British Museum and from periodicals, but also, above all, directly through his relations with such thinkers as James Mill. Those schools of thought were little known at the time among Latin Americans, whose philosophical interests had shifted, almost imperceptibly, from enlightenment to ideology, while retaining a backdrop of traditional thinking. These relations may partly explain his lasting interest in the

physical and natural sciences, topical subjects due to the dynamic spread of the agricultural and industrial revolution which was bringing about major changes in the living conditions and habits of town—and country-dwellers alike. These changes may well have stimulated him later to write his *Cosmografía* and numerous articles such as those collected together in Volume XX of his *Obras completas*; also some very early articles showing his enthusiastic interest in the work of Humboldt, which was to be lifelong, published in the *Repertorio americano*. Bello subsequently contributed many articles to *El Araucano* (see the issues of 16 and 30 August 1831 and 21 January 1832). In one of these he observes, for instance, that ‘a course of physics is essential in order to round off preparatory education, because without any notions of what nature is, previously acquired knowledge amounts to very little’. Incidentally, it is my view that Bello’s scientific interests constitute a relatively neglected but crucial aspect for a full understanding of his education and the significance of his educational activity. And of course these philosophical influences, together with others such as the Eclectic and Scottish schools, are present in his *Filosofía del entendimiento* on which we cannot dwell here. Suffice it to recall the authoritative opinion of José Gaos that ‘it is without doubt the most important work of its kind in American literature’.

Up to that period the uncertainty of his situation was like a leitmotif which followed him as inexorably as his own shadow. He made repeated attempts to return to the New World, with representations to authorities and friends in Río de la Plata and New Granada, explaining his hardships and difficulties; but for many years it was all to no avail. His relations with Mariano de Egaña, slow to develop because of some initial misunderstandings, eventually became a sincere friendship. Convinced of the potential benefits to Chile of a man of the capacity and experience of the humble legation secretary, de Egaña proposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his country that Bello be given an appointment.

Once his transfer to South America had been agreed upon, Bello prepared to leave for his new post in a country in which he had never lived. His mixed feelings are admirably expressed in a fragment of a letter written on the eve of his departure and cited by Rodríguez Monegal: ‘I am impatiently awaiting daybreak and my departure from this city, which is hateful to me on so many scores and on so many others worthy of my love.’

After the long sea crossing he reached Santiago, accompanied by his family and belongings, of which books formed the bulk. At close on 50 years of age, Bello was beginning a new life.

His life in Chile

When Andrés Bello arrived at Valparaíso from Europe on 25 June 1829 Chile was at a critical juncture of its history, with far-reaching changes in its socio-economic, political and institutional structures, in addition to substantial modifications on the cultural and educational level. Major expansion was then taking place in the mining industry, which was energizing the economy. This un hoped-for wealth helped to restore a climate of greater stability, which soon resulted in a fresh balance between the various interest groups, both rural and commercial. The Battle of Lircay completed a cycle of events: with the liberals (*pipiolos*) defeated by the conservatives (*pelucones*), General Joaquín Prieto came to power, appointing Diego Portales as chief minister with a programme basically involving the restoration of law and order. The centralist 1833 Constitution, based on limited suffrage, was a marked departure from the previous more democratic one. It favoured the traditional conservative sectors but, as already noted, its rigour was also of benefit to all the productive sectors, since the advent of an authoritarian republic on firm presidential lines served to consolidate order, organize public finances and discipline the army, at that time a destabilizing influence.

The successful war against the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation (initiated by Portales, who was assassinated on the eve of the hostilities) was a new factor helping to strengthen Chile's institutions. Peace ushered in a period of prosperity, and gradually relative liberalization made it possible to modernize institutions in addition to offering a more favourable climate to attract intellectuals and scientists (Andrés Bello, José Joaquín de Mora, Guillermo A. Blest, Leopoldo Sazie, and others). Stability and security attracted many political exiles from various places, but above all from neighbouring countries (Juan García del Río, Juan Carlos Gómez, Domingo F. Sarmiento, Vicente F. López, Juan B. Alberdi, etc.), who played an outstandingly fruitful role in education and journalism. To understand the events that followed, we have to take account of various lines of ideological influence and go back, in the area of education, to the existence of the Instituto Nacional, which dispensed higher vocational education; to the old University of San Felipe, in the last stages of decline; and at the secondary level, to the Liceo, imbued with the liberal spirit of its principal, J.J. de Mora, and the more conservative Colegio de Santiago directed by Andrés Bello. All these produced a stimulating climate for the exiles, a profusion of publications and hotly debated issues, and attempts at intellectual modernization reflected in numerous initiatives.

Briefly, it may be said that the Venezuelan Andrés Bello gradually gravitated into a place of ever-increasing importance in Chilean society. The fact that he was formidably well-versed in a variety of disciplines, coupled above all with a very sound education, enabled him to play an outstanding role in political and institutional life, as a senator and senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In journalism he distinguished himself as a constant contributor to the combative press of the time, particularly to *El Araucano*. As regards the important field of education and culture, he was Rector of the University and the author of works of lasting and continent-wide value, such as his *Gramática de la lengua castellana destinada al uso de los americanos* (Grammar of the Spanish Language for Latin Americans), *Principios de derecho internacional* (Principles of International Law), *Proyecto de código civil* (Draft Civil Code), and *Filosofía del entendimiento* (The Philosophy of Understanding), to cite only a few basic works from various disciplines, quite apart from his outstanding literary contributions as a critic and creative writer.

The university

In pursuance of Articles 153 and 154 of the 1833 Constitution, and by virtue of the law of 19 November 1842, the University of Chile was founded on centralist lines following the model generally called Napoleonic, that is, as the body responsible for all educational activities at all levels, a kind of ministry of public instruction, or education as we say today. In this way the foundations were laid of the State as educator.

It should be stressed that elevated to this position, the university became the higher body which established policies and organized institutions. A particular feature of the university was that it did not perform a direct teaching function but was confined to the supervision and appointment of teachers.

The old University of San Felipe was closing down after a long process of decline that it would be out of place to recount here, and it was replaced by the new university, inaugurated in a splendid formal ceremony on 17 September 1843. Contrary to the commonly held view, there was little continuity between the two institutions despite superficial appearances (incorporation of the professors from San Felipe, the presence of its former rector, Juan Francisco Meneses, on the new university council, etc.). A clean break was made, with a fresh start, as can be easily inferred from the functions, organization and objectives of the newly founded university, and above all from the spirit that pervaded

it. Andrés Bello, whose participation was decisive in the whole operation, was appointed rector and at the same time a member of the Faculties of Law and Political Sciences and of Philosophy and the Arts.

Of outstanding importance was the inaugural address delivered by Bello at the University of Chile. It contains a statement of much of his ideas on education, particularly higher education, of a lofty wide-ranging theoretical nature to be expected from a humanist of his calibre but at the same time revealing his urgent reflection on the social implications and specific problems of the university as he saw it at that time and in that setting, that is, firmly rooted in reality. Some passages can only be fully understood in the light of the contemporary situation, as an implicit response to intuitive concerns and questionings. For example:

The question is whether universities and literary bodies are suitable instruments for the spreading of enlightenment. I can hardly conceive of any doubt about this, in an age that is, par excellence, one of association and representation; in an age marked by the proliferation of societies concerned with agriculture, commerce, industry and public welfare; in an age of representative government. Europe, and the United States of America, our models in so many respects, give us the answer to this question.

He was thus replying to those who, as recalled by Miguel Luis Amunátegui, were at that time still advocates of the strange theory that ‘instruction depraves instead of improving the soul, and fosters fanciful and pernicious pretensions, instead of encouraging people to get down to quiet honest work’. Bello goes on:

If the spread of knowledge is one of the most important prerequisites, because without it the arts would do no more than offer a few scattered points of light in the enshrouding darkness, the bodies to which we are mainly indebted for the speed of literary communication are of vital benefit to enlightenment and to mankind as a whole. As soon as a new truth germinates in the mind of a single individual, it becomes the property of the literary community as a whole. The scholars of Germany, France and the United States appreciate its worth, its consequences and its applications. In this dissemination of knowledge, academies and universities all become depositaries continually accumulating all the latest scientific findings, which then spread out more easily from them to reach the various classes of society. The University of Chile has been founded for this special purpose. If it achieves the ends sought by the law that has given it its new form, and fulfils the desires of our government, it will be an outstanding centre of communication and dissemination.

But this foremost concern with higher or university education did not in his view imply any disregard for the primary level:

I am certainly among those who regard general instruction, the education of the people, as one of the most important and priority purposes to which the government should direct its attention; as a prime and urgent necessity; as the basis of any sound progress; as the essential cement of republican institutions. [...] I do not say that the cultivation of the arts and the sciences necessarily carries in its wake the spread of elementary education; there is however no doubt that the sciences and the arts possess a natural tendency to spread when no artificial obstacles are placed in their path. [...]

But the law, in re-establishing the university, seeks not only to rely on the natural tendency of knowledge to spread, now that the press provides it with unprecedented coverage; the law has also closely linked the two kinds of education, giving one section of the university special responsibility for primary education, supervising its operation, helping to expand it, and contributing to its progress.

Having explained these assumptions and the workings of the proposed new system, he goes on to clarify the basis of his philosophy:

The university will also study the special features of Chilean society from the economic standpoint, which presents vast problems calling for bold solutions. The university will examine the findings of Chilean statistics and help to compile them, and will use them to interpret our material needs. For in this, as in other branches, the programme of the university

is entirely Chilean. If it borrows scientific deductions from Europe, it is in order to apply them in Chile. All the paths along which it is proposed to direct research by its members, and the courses taught, converge on one point, our native land. [...] Similarly, medical science will investigate the specific modifications that give the Chileans their climate, their customs and their diet; it will lay down rules for hygiene and public health; it will seek to identify the secret causes of epidemics and their ravages; and it will do its utmost to ensure that knowledge of simple means of preserving and restoring health spreads throughout the country. There is no need for me to list the positive uses of the mathematical and physical sciences, their applications to a nascent industry barely equipped with a few rudimentary skills, lacking properly understood methods, lacking machines and even the most common tools; their applications to a mineral-bearing land criss-crossed by veins of metal, to a soil rich in plant resources and nutritious substances, to a soil on which science has scarcely yet cast a glance.

However, practical applications should not be confused with ‘the gropings of blind empiricism’, since only ‘general knowledge gives clarity and precision to special knowledge’.

As a humanist, Bello early emphasized the value of the formative disciplines, among which

[...] the study of our language seems to me to be of the utmost importance. I shall never advocate an excessive purism that condemns anything new in the matter of language. On the contrary, I believe that the great number of new ideas constantly passing from literary usage to general circulation call for new ways of expressing them. [...] Language can be extended and enriched, and it can be adapted to all the needs of society and even those of fashion, which exerts an unquestioned sway over literature without adulterating it, without vitiating its constructions and without violating its intrinsic spirit.

Bello had also previously pointed to the political responsibility of the university in consolidating institutions and in the preliminary remedial action to be taken: ‘We must cleanse it of the blemishes it acquired under the evil influence of despotism.’

These few fragments from Bello’s historic speech require no further comment but it must be acknowledged that they project something quite distinct from the conventional, mistaken image of a Bello more a friend of the arts than of the sciences, more interested in ideas and theories than in their practical applications, and more concerned with higher than with popular education. Above all, they contrast with the common view of a rigid ‘conservative’ in matters of language.

If we disregard the historical context in which certain ideas are expressed, we may miss their significance, particularly where they were being embodied in the theoretical panoply of the philosophers of education, and might even at times seem ‘natural’.

This is well illustrated in the speech delivered by Diego Barros Arana on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the University of Chile:

Some believed that, by proclaiming freedom of debate, the University was going to endanger the survival of the traditional ideas that were regarded as the very basis of the social order. Others maintained that the new institution, in imposing its doctrines, was going to clip the wings of thought and become, more or less openly, the mainstay of the old intellectual regime that the political and social revolution of 1810 had not succeeded in modifying. Andrés Bello was at pains to demonstrate that between those extreme tendencies lay a vast field of action for the university, and he set the university movement on the only course then reconcilable with the embryonic state of our intellectual culture. His work was one of initiation, paving the way for firmer and more sustained progress.

Primary education

The interest taken by Bello in elementary education was of long standing. Brief reference may be made to an article cited by J.C. Jobet (*El Araucano*, 5 and 12 August 1836), which we consider illustrates the point very well:

The right of governments in a matter of such importance can never be excessive. Promoting public institutions for only a small proportion of the population is not promoting education, because it does not suffice to produce competent people for the professions. It is necessary to educate useful citizens and to improve society, and this cannot be done without opening up the field of progress to the bulk of the people. What good would it do us to have orators, jurists and statesmen if the great mass of the people live plunged in darkest ignorance, deprived of their due share of trade and wealth, and unable to accede to the well-being which the people are entitled to expect of a State? Failure to pay attention to the most suitable means of educating the people would be tantamount to taking no interest in national prosperity.

This concern, with its broad perspective, was to lead to an extraordinary number of initiatives. To take just one, a competition was held to reward the best work on the following themes: ‘(a) the influence of primary education on customs, public morality, industry and the general development of national prosperity; (b) the way in which it should be organized, in view of the country’s needs; and (c) the best funding system to maintain this education.’ The result of the competition is well known, and has been extensively covered by the present writer on another occasion. The first prize went to Miguel Luis and Gregorio Victor Amunátegui for their work *De la instrucción primaria: lo que es, lo que debería ser* (Primary Education: What It Is and What It Ought To Be), and the second to Domingo F. Sarmiento for *Educación común* (Education for All), works which greatly influenced the subsequent development of primary education in Chile.

Other educational concerns

Bello did not overlook secondary education. Indeed, he had a very modern conception of it, as evidenced by his warning that it should not be regarded as ‘a mere preparation for professional careers or as a means of reaching university, but as an end in itself’.

An exhaustive account of Bello’s educational philosophy would require a description of his concern with an education that was South American in character, its linkage with the idea of work, his interest in the content of education and teaching methods, the preparation of textbooks for all levels of the education system and his concern with what we would today call scientific popularization; and so forth. But, above all, there was his notion of education as a right, and its links with production, in order to promote the continuing democratization of society. The following passages put things in a nutshell and speak for themselves:

Republican governments are no more than the representatives and the agents of the national will. Being obliged as such to follow the trends of that will, they cannot opt out of the responsibility to achieve the grand design of making individuals useful to themselves and others through education. Furthermore, the democratic representative system empowers its members to take a more or less direct part in affairs; and peoples will not be able to progress along the political path unless education becomes sufficiently widespread to give all individuals a true awareness of their obligations and their rights without which it is impossible to discharge the former or to accord to the latter the value which prompts us to concern ourselves with preserving them.

Elsewhere he emphasizes the need to bring education ‘within the reach of all young people, whatever their circumstances and way of life; to encourage them to acquire it; and to facilitate its acquisition by increasing the number of institutions and by standardizing methods, as effective means of giving to education the impetus most conducive to national prosperity.’

Angel Rosenblat writes that ‘for Bello, language is the instrument of cultural training’. This explains the role ascribed by the author of *Alocución a la poesía* to the teaching of language at all

levels of the education system. When Bello proposed the creation of a chair of Spanish grammar distinct from the existing chair of Latin grammar, he was taking a rationalist stand against those who, while considering it legitimate to study the language of Virgil, were opposed to the same being done for that of Cervantes, arguing that the mother-tongue was learnt 'naturally', thus precluding the need for rules and norms. (Studying and memorizing Latin did not suffice, in Bello's view at least, to consolidate a good modern education.) But giving autonomy to the teaching of Spanish and legislating for the use of new scientific methods to replace the old 'natural' or routine ones, he secured for Spanish that flexibility and grace which it could not otherwise have attained through continued subjection to Latin, or by being 'left to its own devices'. Bello's ideas on the subject helped to emancipate the Latin American medium of communication. We should remember, however, that emancipation to him implied not a break but a retrieval, on another plane, of a creative continuity. His *Gramática*, which was then more advanced than that of the Academy itself, adequately illustrates this view. It would not be appropriate to pursue the matter here, or to consider such themes as his lifelong concern for the risk of the linguistic fragmentation of Spanish, or to dwell on his very extensive work as a philologist, grammarian and critic (contained in several volumes of his *Obras completas*), all of which work is well known and has been aptly studied at length by generations of specialists.

Nor is it appropriate to deal here with Bello's substantial contributions in the field of law, a full understanding of which requires them to be related to his conception of the world and of culture. In this regard his juridical work served, as recalled by P. Lira Urquieta, to give 'a modern appearance to the notions of authority and order which were still expressed in verbose colonial language. Without breaking with tradition, he instilled a love of progress and carried it forward with a measured step. He helped to institute respect for the law, giving the country that political stability without which all other action is enfeebled or comes to an end.'

The profound political significance of his ideas is already to be noted in some of his early works, which otherwise might seem of limited interest. In 1830, on the subject of public trials, he rapidly proceeds to a statement of general principles:

The lack of harmony between new institutions and old establishments means that any complication will worsen our situation by the mere fact of substituting one system for another; that the best remedy for the ailments of a constitution which has not yet had time to become consolidated is to maintain it at all costs, improve it gradually and, above all, make room in it for the other parts of our political organization.

We clearly have here—to quote once more P. Lira Urquieta—'in embryo, the main lines of the conception of Portales: to establish a strong government in Chile which will be a kind of prolongation of a monarchy, but with a republican form.'

Much could be also be said about Bello's historical ideas, repeatedly set forth in numerous works and often confronted with those of his disciples José Victorino Latorre and Francisco Bilbao, to whom social romanticism held out new horizons. Any addition to the various aspects covered above, such as his participation in the controversies of the age (on romanticism, language and spelling), some of them memorable on account both of the persons involved and the level of theory attained, would divert us from the essential purpose of this biographical sketch, which is to show the role played by the educational ideas of Bello in his time, and consequently to review their currency today.

Andrés Bello died in Santiago de Chile on 15 October 1865.

Note

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Andrés Bello's writings on education

We are fortunate to have available a remarkable critical edition of the *Obras completas de Andrés Bello* [The Complete Works of Andres Bello] published by the Venezuelan Ministry of Education in 1952 and undertaken subsequently by the Fundación Casa de Bello. Volume XVIII, *Temas educacionales* [Educational themes] (Caracas, 1981) consists of two parts, with an introduction by Luis B. Prieto Figueroa entitled 'The educational works of Andrés Bello'.

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