

Neo-Kantianism in the philosophical thought of José del Perojo y Figueras in the second half of the 19th century

Neokantismo en el pensamiento filosófico de José del Perojo y Figueras en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze the particularities of the neo-Kantian thought of José del Perojo y Figueras (1850-1908), distinguishing its hermeneutic-theoretical dimension from its regenerationist projection in Spanish politics and pedagogy. From a qualitative approach, a critical-interpretive analysis of his main works was carried out to reconstruct his system of thought. This analysis identified a dual aspect to his Neo-Kantianism: Firstly, the hermeneutic criticism, which seeks to base philosophy on science and psychology, rejecting the post-Kantian speculative idealism. Secondly, a regenerationist project that applied neo-Kantian principles to the modernization of Spain, its colonial policy, and national education. It was concluded that José del Perojo articulated a unique form of neo-Kantianism that served as a link between German critical theory and the socio-political problems of Spain during the Restoration. Although little studied, his work represents a remarkable case of reception and transformation of the critical idealism in the Hispanic American context.

Key words: neo-Kantianism; neo-Kantian thought; Hispanic American philosophical context; philosophical thought.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las particularidades del pensamiento neokantiano de José del Perojo y Figueras (1850-1908), distinguiendo su dimensión hermenéutico-teórica de su proyección regeneracionista en la política y pedagogía españolas. Desde un enfoque cualitativo se realizó un análisis crítico-interpretativo de sus obras principales, para la reconstrucción de su sistema de pensamiento. A partir de ello, se identificó una doble vertiente en su neokantismo, en primer lugar, la crítica hermenéutica, que busca fundamentar la filosofía en la ciencia y la psicología, rechazando el idealismo especulativo postkantiano; en segundo orden un proyecto regeneracionista que aplicó principios neokantianos a la modernización de España, a su política colonial y hacia una pedagogía nacional. Se pudo concluir que José del Perojo articuló un neokantismo singular que funcionó como articulación entre la teoría crítica alemana y los problemas socio-políticos de la España de la Restauración. Aunque poco estudiado, su obra representa un caso destacable de recepción y transformación del idealismo crítico en el contexto hispanoamericano.

Palabras clave: neokantismo; pensamiento neokantiano; contexto filosófico hispanoamericano, pensamiento filosófico.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context, there has been a growing interest in the study of neo-Kantianism, which authors such as Páez (2022) and Bonifaci (2023) attribute to its historiographical value, considering it essential to understanding and addressing the origins of contemporary philosophy and the transition from modern philosophy to posterior thought. In this regard, research has also been identified that focuses not on its role in the internal evolution of philosophical thought, but rather on its influence in other areas of scientific knowledge (Álvarez, 2023). On the other hand, amid concerns about global political and cultural instability, authors such as Esparza & Bravo (2023) have also taken an interest in addressing the role of philosophy as a builder of peace, concepts in which the foundations of neo-Kantianism also play a remarkable role.

In the specific case of the Cuban-Spanish philosopher José del Perojo, there has also been interest in the scope of his thinking in the contemporary landscape, with research addressing different facets of his work, such as that of Díaz (1996), Díaz (2015), Matamoro (2024), and specifically on its scope within the Hispanic American context (Rodríguez, 2025).

Del Perojo believed that he had found in neo-Kantianism the philosophical doctrine that could be used as an intellectual foundation for the modernization of Spain, specifically in the scientific, economic, social, and cultural fields. He also saw it as a means of overcoming the crisis in Spanish liberalism, which was essentially due to the failure of Krausism. For these reasons, he focused part of his work on the project of changing the Spanish intellectual sphere, spreading modern scientific thought, and europeanizing Spain.

The beginning of these activities can be traced back to his publication of *Essays on the Intellectual Movement in Germany* in 1875, and also to the founding, in December of that year, of the *Revista Contemporánea* (Contemporary Journal), with scientific and cultural publications aimed at all types of readers. Furthermore, in 1877 he founded the journal *La Naturaleza* (Nature) and the Perojo Publishing House, with a philosophical and scientific orientation that focused on offering its readers translations they themselves made of works by foreign authors,

with the aim of enriching Spanish culture through contact with European culture. These works were the first Spanish translations of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Descartes' philosophical works. In 1883, del Perojo translated Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and in 1885, Darwin's *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*.

Del Perojo brought philosophical issues to different economic, social, and political spheres in an attempt to resolve the relationship between the Spanish colonies and the metropolis; in doing so, neo-Kantian doctrine was always part of his thinking in resolving these problems. He advocated for equal treatment of overseas territories and for them to identify with those on the peninsula. He defended the colonies from his position as a journalist and cultural entrepreneur and from the political offices he held during his lifetime. In 1899, he founded the *Nuevo Mundo* publishing house and, in 1900, *Por esos Mundos* and *El Teatro*.

In 1905, he returned to active politics and was elected representative for Las Palmas de Gran Canaria within Antonio Maura's Conservative Party. He was a founder of the Spanish Press Association, and in 1906 he focused on defending freedom of the press. In 1907, after being re-elected as a representative for Las Palmas, he began a campaign in favor of administrative decentralization in the Canary Islands. That same year, he began to focus his journalistic and political attention on educational issues, which led him to publish the work *Essays on Education*.

In 1908, he made several trips to England in the company of Ramiro de Maeztu to compare the situation of Spanish education with that of Europe, and he compiled some of the parliamentary speeches he gave on this subject in the volume *La Educación Española* (Spanish Education). José del Perojo died on October 17, 1908, in his seat in parliament, while listening to a reply to an amendment he had drafted for the local administration reform bill that sought to achieve the division of the Canary Islands into two provinces.

Despite José del Perojo y Figueras' limited bibliography on neo-Kantianism, the prevalence of his neo-Kantian thinking can be found implicitly in his essays. He reflected on this thinking with deep analysis and emphasized the psychological aspect of Kantianism, which was omitted or

studied very little within this movement at the time it was in force. In order to understand the scope of this topic in his thinking, the objective of this study is to establish the particularities of José del Perojo y Figueras's neo-Kantianism in the philosophical context of the second half of the 19th century.

METHODOLOGY

From a qualitative paradigm, this study is based on a critical-interpretative analysis of the philosophical and political-pedagogical works of José del Perojo. The main corpus consists of his works: *Essays on the Intellectual Movement in Germany* (1875), *Essays on Colonial Policy* (1885), *Essays on Education* (1907), and *Spanish Education* (1908).

The different phases of the analysis were structured as follows:

- 1) Reconstructive reading to identify the conceptual core of his thinking
- 2) Conceptual analysis of key terms
- 3) Historical contextualization to situate his arguments within the intellectual debate in Spain during the Restoration period.
- 4) Critical analysis of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analytical-theoretical neo-Kantian thought of José del Perojo y Figueras

This first part is contained in philosopher José del Perojo's exposition on this neo-Kantian movement, with his analysis of what has been said and omitted. He also provides commentary on the elements that should be essential within the neo-Kantian movement and questions the mistakes that were made.

The reason behind neo-Kantianism

José del Perojo strictly expresses what it means to be neo-Kantian. Some of Kant's ideas must be taken into account, as he is the starting point for opposition to the predominance of metaphysics

in Hegel's doctrine. "This does not mean that in this opposition absolute attention will be paid to Kant's theory, as that would be to be Kantian, but rather that, taking from this philosopher what is useful to refute the preeminence of metaphysics in Hegel, progress must be made in philosophical thought to correct the errors that previous thinkers did not resolve" (Perojo, 1875, p.10).

The philosopher Del Perojo also explains that neo-Kantianism had to exist in order to correct the anti-scientific idealism that began to emerge after Kant's death. The philosophical systems that continued German classical philosophy clung to finding flaws in Kantian theory and ended up creating idealistic systems without any scientific basis, jeopardizing the credibility of philosophy. Neo-Kantianism arose in response to the predominance of metaphysics in post-Kantian systems, which made inadequate use of it. Metaphysics was conceived as a problem that lies outside the limits of theoretical reason and was used by post-Kantians to explain the origin and meaning of dreams and life. It was responsible for studying events that occur in the universe and cannot be explained by other fields of science, but which frequently appear in the areas of spiritualism and theology.

Del Perojo believed that metaphysics studied everything in the world in a different way from scientific experiments and that it was observed in reality. Everything that was produced through it was ideal. It could be found beyond possible experience. It was based on the categories of being and the absolute. All conflicts are resolved through the mere use of reason, discarding the real. Therefore, neo-Kantianism was the consideration of philosophy as a reflection on scientific knowledge, it had the need to provide logical reasons in the search for the explanation of abstraction. Neo-Kantianism was the alternative to counteract the advance and monopolization of the impossible idealisms of the post-Kantians.

Faced with this diagnosis, the Cuban philosopher explains how it is possible to find an objective for philosophy through a contrast between philosophy and the natural sciences. Physicists must set their scientific goal on explaining natural phenomena, that is, on searching for their causes and the principles that govern the connections among phenomena. But this type of explanation requires, as a basis for its articulation, a set of concepts: necessary connection, property, force, cause, etc. From an internal point of view, it is

not possible for the natural sciences to explain these concepts, as they are fundamental to any attempt at explanation.

However, for Del Perojo, such a perspective can only correspond to divine understanding. This theory of knowledge as a copy is presented as the basis for the conflict between dogmatists and skeptics. Kant's merit, then, lies in being the first author to consistently refute this theory. The motive behind the critique of Hegelianism is the correction of a conception of the world. What this expression seeks to point out is that the new interest in Hegel is connected with the need to confront positivism and materialism or, in other words, with the need to reaffirm the spiritual dimension of life in the face of the growing technification of society.

Following this idealistic line of thought, Del Perojo defines philosophy as a process of self-knowledge for humanity. This process is also one of self-formation, described as the transition from a natural state of life to a cultural state of life. Through this process, human beings go from being mere members of a species to becoming members of the common process of human fulfillment. In this way, what can be called normative consciousness in Kantian philosophy is transformed into an ideal of human community. The neo-Kantianism studied by the author through his studies of historical hermeneutics is an innovation with respect to his previous neo-Kantian position.

Despite neo-Kantianism's combat against other philosophical currents, the inadequacy of its program to fulfill its own objectives, that is, to offer a rehabilitation of philosophy in the face of the various manifestations of positivism, is evident. Specifically, the failure of neo-Kantianism lies in its unilateral orientation toward the theory of knowledge. It cannot be said that the main thrust of the theory of knowledge has not been powerful enough to purge critical philosophy of the defects of its subjectivist vocabulary.

The essential features of Mach and Russell's empiricist theory are reproduced in the notions of logical positivism. Logical positivism raised the question of the relationship between sensory data and the world of material bodies, as well as the question of the relationship between propositions and terms about sensory data (so-called phenomenal language) and propositions and terms about physical things (so-called objective

language). Logical positivism posited that an objective language proposition is equivalent to a finite conjunction of propositions about sensory data; that is, it is only a specific abbreviation of the propositions that fix in language the results of simple immediate observations. Furthermore, it declared that theoretical concepts in their essence only represent a shorthand abbreviation for the empirical material that is given in sensory experience.

The Psyche in Hermeneutic Naturalist Neo-Kantian Thought

In the sense of naturalistic hermeneutic neo-Kantianism, Perojo's view of the psyche is that it "deals with the dynamic functioning of the brain to maintain its existence and reproduce life" (Perojo, 1875, p.189). The Cuban philosopher explains that the dynamics of the psyche direct its objectives for action and create images of the world and of itself, as well as understanding who it is and what it can expect in the future. When the scientific spirit emerged from its lethargy, psychology began its existence as a system, with its first object being the study of consciousness, and it became associated with empirical phenomenology.

He explained that consciousness is described and defined in relation to knowledge and behavior, since human beings are affected by their interaction with the environment and with others; they are influenced by their interpretation of such interaction. Consciousness is also acquired through the way in which individuals communicate with others, conceive of their lives and the world, and accumulate and transmit knowledge to future generations. In this sense, consciousness helps to give meaning to human experience, to stabilize one's image of the world, to render the future more predictable, and to provide strategies for problem-solving and planning. Consciousness thus enables the reduction of life's uncertainty.

For the philosopher Del Perojo, consciousness can also establish imaginary final causes that act as stimuli and rules to guide its activities. It provides symbolic images about who we are, what we perceive, feel, and think; about what others think of others; it constructs models for interpreting experiences and recognizing them. It is the means of communicative and instrumental actions of cultural groups and, linked to this, the existence of social and organic structures capable of producing and using symbols as if they were entities that they represent.

José del Perojo also explained that among these mechanisms are discourses that depict created things as images of reality, and mythical narratives that express the ideas of a people's ancestors about the world in which they live. This ideography emerged so that peoples could respond to questions that were inexplicable and, therefore, became part of their traditions and customs, serving to understand the causes of life and death and the existence of things and the world in general.

One weakness of Perojo's thesis is that psychologism draws an analogy with classical logicism, which sought to reduce any theory to the universal laws of logic, but considered psychology to be at the top of this hierarchy. This prevents access to the root of the principle of what these mental processes are. Subjective meaning would impose insurmountable limits on the potential for knowing reality, even at the risk of confusing the product of thought with the tool through which philosophical knowledge is obtained. Husserl expressed his concern about the equivalence of the empirical with the psychological, considering that the two had very different objectives and results (Husserl, 1999).

The reality with independent existence of the psychophysical nature

According to José del Perojo, "objective knowledge is inherent only to rational beings" (Perojo, 1875, p.12); but knowledge has two essential components. On the one hand, there is sensation, which is acquired through the senses and results in immediate knowledge, as it is undeniably evident. This sensation is subject to natural laws specific to humans, and through it, things are reproduced according to their innate dispositions. On the other hand, there are forms of subjectivity, which are those molds that are applied, in a manner determined by natural disposition, to things acquired through the senses.

He believed that these forms serve to synthesize all diversity that borders on sensitivity in order to form concepts. It would be difficult to believe that most knowledge is abstract, since everything that is perceived through sensitivity is structured by our forms. Human beings cannot know everything they come into contact with, since they are not born with the genetic or innate capacity to do so.

Perojo's conception does not take into account that, for Plato, all real knowledge must be universal, persistent, and objective and, consequently, cannot depend on the individual and personal particularities of the knowing subject. Plato's philosophy was the first to recognize the need to overcome the subjective aspects of knowledge in order to accurately reconstruct the object of cognitive activity. This presented the task of finding those properties of the object that prove to be enduring in different cognitive relationships. This is an important task throughout the history of philosophy and is being discussed again with greater emphasis in relation to the methodological problems of mathematics, physics, and psychology.

About the historical necessity and logical necessity of Kantian criticism

The return to Kant was a historical necessity that became a logical necessity. For José del Perojo, "the historical necessity could be understood insofar as Kantian theory extends to all areas of knowledge and, therefore, should have been the doctrine taken as the starting point for all philosophical disquisitions" (Perojo, 1875, p. 190). All philosophical systems sought to find flaws in it. However, none realized their direct or indirect relationship to this theory.

Del Perojo believed that logical necessity could be based on Kant's thesis on the forms of knowledge. These forms are found in a primitive state in the subject and compel him to represent and know the world according to their configuration and scheme. Kantian epistemology is the doctrine of a priori forms that constitute and condition the objects of knowledge. All systems moved away from religious fatalism and dogmatism to focus on the active and creative principle found in the subject that produces objects. Anything done while disregarding this philosopher's work, without taking into account its significance and value, is futile and wasted effort.

In this approach, Del Perojo may have taken into consideration that Hegel developed Kant's view of the subject as self-activity. Hegel did not understand self-activity as a static act that takes place outside of space and time, but rather as the self-development of the subject, which manifests itself especially in the development of the forms of practical and cognitive activity of human society. For him, categories appear as degrees of knowledge of the external world

and of the absolute spirit by social human beings. Hegel considered the subject-object problem historically, at the level of an analysis of the development of the relationship between consciousness and object. "The subject only exists insofar as it is an eternal coming-to-be, an endless movement. The absolute spirit as absolute subject-object does not exist outside the process of its self-discovery and self-realization. The result cannot be understood without the path that led to it, and the result contains this path preserved and overcome as a moment of itself" (Hegel, 1966, p. 246).

Dialectical materialism asserted that knowledge is not an independent thing that intrudes between subject and object, but rather a moment in the subject's activity toward the object, a specific transformed form of the cognitive process. Knowledge represents the potential cognitive activity of the subject. When knowledge is transformed from a potential cognitive activity into an actual one, it no longer appears in a transformed form of objectivity, but as a moment in the cognitive process. Thus, in reality, there are not two independent relationships—that of knowledge with the object and that of the subject with knowledge—but only the relationship between subject and object. Knowledge is not a mediator between subject and object, but a form of the realization of the cognitive relationship. In its transformed, specific form, it is a kind of crystallization of the cognitive activity realized and the form of its possible future development.

About the principle of morality that must be found in Psychology

José del Perojo argued that "moral judgments or propositions that seek to determine human behavior must lack scientific basis and can only express the aspirations, feelings, attitudes, emotions, and desires of the individuals who formulate them" (Perojo, 1875, p. 196). In the field of ethics and philosophy, José del Perojo's thinking is characterized by his attempt to establish a universalist morality inspired by Kant on an intersubjective basis. Similarly, his theoretical philosophy is based on the subject of the philosophy of consciousness, from which philosophical systems of monologue can only be constructed.

Instead of psychological or transcendental consciousness, Del Perojo proposes as the subject of morality a conceptual instance that he calls self-consciousness, which he defines as the

consciousness of the other. From here, he develops a broad and detailed project of ethical foundation for historical hermeneutic neo-Kantianism, a current that, from his point of view, is the necessary consequence and culmination of all practical philosophy inspired by Kant. However, a central methodological feature of Del Perojo's ethics consists in his proposal to apply the transcendental method in the practical sphere of reason, just as Kant applied it to theoretical philosophy.

This is why the Cuban philosopher attempts to demonstrate his ethical thesis transcendently, which posits the fundamentally intersubjective nature of morality. This thesis, in other words, is not merely an edifying or suggestive proposal, but proceeds to show that fundamental intersubjectivity is the condition of possibility for a given reality. Reality, or the factum that forms the basis of this transcendental demonstration, is legal reality in terms of mediation between the pure concepts of ethics and social reality. The aim is to resolve what appears to be a lack of coherence in the system of critical philosophy: that Kant did not apply the transcendental method to practical reason in the same way that he applied it to theoretical reason.

Neo-Kantianism accepts scientific progress and a process of progressive determination of the object of knowledge; however, this progress does not allow for a rectification or modification of epistemological categories, but rather a greater determination in the knowledge of the empirical object. In other words, scientific progress as conceived by neo-Kantianism can lead to greater knowledge and determination of the scientific object, but it would never imply a rectification of the categories that have been deduced by the transcendental method, those that are at the basis of scientific work. Such categories seem to be ahistorical, timeless.

Hegel develops Kant's view of the subject as self-activity. At the same time, he no longer understands self-activity as a static act that takes place outside of space and time, but rather as the self-development of the subject, which manifests itself especially in the development of the forms of practical and cognitive activity of human society. Categories appear as degrees of knowledge of the external world and of the absolute spirit by the social human being. For the first time, the subject-object problem is raised historically, at the level of an analysis of the development of the

relationship between consciousness and object. The subject only exists insofar as it is an eternal becoming, an endless movement. The absolute spirit as an absolute subject-object does not exist outside the process of its self-discovery and self-realization. The result cannot be understood without the path that led to it, and the result contains this path preserved and overcome as a moment of itself.

On internal experience and external experience

Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of experimental psychology, took into account two aspects of the psyche: one biological and individual; the other historical, cultural, and social. These were universal psychological principles that could be studied in the laboratory, and historical-cultural laws that had to be developed using historical and comparative methods, the latter being particular specifications derived from universal principles. For the Cuban philosopher José del Perojo, “fundamentally, all neo-Kantians agree, and the difference is that some take the question from a theoretical perspective, while others examine its origin and formation, which is why it is called a psychological question, to distinguish it from the former” (Perojo, 1875, p.191).

On the one hand, according to the philosopher del Perojo, the theoretical aspect of Kant’s doctrine of knowledge lies in those who followed it without resorting to experience. This theoretical aspect is nothing more than what would be called discursive knowledge, to distinguish it from intuitive knowledge, which is based on perception and experience, while the former is based on Logic. For del Perojo, Logic is the science that discovers the laws for finding certain, that is, objective, knowledge, detaching it from the subjectivity inherent in customs, traditions, religious beliefs, and personal experiences. Reasoning discovered through logic at that moment was science, for everything that proceeds from it will conclude in certainty.

Through it, human beings can move from sensory knowledge to thought and find essential links between the objects they focus on. On the other hand, for Del Perojo, the psychological question means that human consciousness only inquires into and investigates what can be verified through sensory experience, that is, the knowledge that each person forms comes from perception. Del Perojo agreed with Wundt that life is conceived as the development of consciousness and freedom through multiple vital processes that

enable human beings to realize themselves in their concrete reality, that is, as living beings with cognitive abilities, not only through reason, but also through the experience acquired throughout their lives, and that this realization occurs not through rational schemes, but through their own experiences.

José del Perojo reflected on how empiricist materialism faced the difficult task of explaining the origin and functioning of so-called internal experience. Naturally, it was not possible to solve this task within the framework of the metaphysical form that was characteristic of the materialism of that time. Hence the lack of clarity, the inconsistency, and the various concessions made to subjectivism in the investigation of the problem of the mutual relationship between external and internal experience by the materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries. In Locke, external (sensory) experience and internal (reflective) experience appear as two almost independent sources of knowledge, whose relationship is not clearly determined, but whose independence is categorically pointed out by the philosopher.

Added to this was another difficulty for philosophers of this period in the subject-object problem, which consisted of the following: for the science of that time, the conception of matter corresponded to the knowledge that had been developed by the mathematical-mechanical natural sciences, which identified it with objective knowledge, and anything that fell outside this margin was declared subjective. Knowledge was interpreted as the analysis and systematization of impressions of the object given in sensory experience (empiricism). Locke’s thesis is typical in this regard, since only simple ideas that are immediately given to the subject in perception can possess objectivity. On the other hand, composite ideas, which are understood as the product of the activity of reason, are always uncertain, conditioned, and relative in their cognitive meaning.

The subjective idealism of the 18th century also ignored the activity of the subject. Thus, Berkeley emphasized that sensations, simple ideas, belong to our mind, but the finite spirit does not produce them but perceives them passively. The merit of recognizing the activity of the subject in the process of knowledge belongs to the classical German idealist philosophy of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Political and pedagogical neo-Kantian regenerationist thinking of José del Perojo y Figueras

José del Perojo was the first to introduce neo-Kantianism in Spain, and with this philosophical system he sought to bring about a change in the culture and education of this country (Díaz, 2015); therefore, he would use it as a reform. José del Perojo believed that “political parties have the function of resisting the lower part of human nature; it is the way to overcome the violent passions that drive human beings to take great risks. Political government conditions a life of peace and allows the emergence and development of spiritual productions such as aesthetic ideas and scientific thoughts. It is a set of provisions agreed upon in a society, conventions to make life easier collectively, that is, safer; as opposed to what life would be like in isolation, in constant antagonism with others. For this reason, it is a way for man to emancipate himself from the needs of the body and the empire of emotions” (Perojo, 1875, pp. 244-251). In Del Perojo’s neo-Kantian regenerationist thinking, we find a way to change society and history and achieve transformation through creative and transcendent knowledge.

Perojo shared the view of man as a historical being, which is essential to the development of neo-Kantian regenerationist thought. This thinking leads to a different assessment of Hegel’s philosophy, which is conditioned by a difference in the philosophy of history of both authors. The history of philosophy in particular is presented as a continuity of human progress towards the realization of the ideal of normative consciousness. But this ideal must be understood in the Kantian sense, that is, the ideal of normative consciousness appears as a misaligned goal, but through which human beings attempt to organize their lives in society. Misaligned because human beings have an antisocial side that forces them to subordinate all their actions to their own convenience and, on the other hand, a social side, through which they understand that living in a community is more powerful and secure.

Radical Party

“Radicalism is the set of ideas and doctrines of those who seek to radically reform the political, scientific, moral, and religious order. José del Perojo compares radicals to children with receptive spirits” (Perojo, 1875, p. 292). They are unencumbered and free from moral and social

ideas. They contemplate ideas infinitely in the form in which they came to mind. They learn a lot and quickly, but always prioritize the use of imagination, producing objects that are not really found in the senses. They play solely for the purpose of finding pleasure and give existence to the things they play with.

The philosopher Del Perojo believes that, despite his contributions, this would be a mistake, as it ignores human nature. Human beings always tend to satisfy their own interests, seek the greatest reward for the least effort, compete for power, and, in the most difficult moments, bring out the worst in the lower faculties of the soul. Radicals do not know how to distinguish the use of the concept of equality; they apply it to law and from there derive all other areas of life, but without taking into account that human nature is complex. Equality is not based on law, but on the very nature of the individual, which is of greater value and substance and must be guaranteed regardless of the price, for society is impulsive, versatile, and irritable.

For this reason, according to del Perojo, it can only be concluded that individuals can only be equal in a natural way, according to their internal characteristics, not according to external rules imposed arbitrarily and created through abstractions of value judgments. The flaws of radicals lie in their starting point, as they do not take into account the limitations of nature and only seek absolute and abstract rules. For example, if freedom is based solely on the individual, it leads to licentiousness, anarchy, and the destruction of the state, and if it is based on society, society can oppress the individual with social and moral norms; therefore, freedom will always be arbitrary. Anarchism is challenging structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in all aspects of life.

Liberal Party

Therefore, it is up to the individual spirit, which is in full enjoyment of its active and creative faculties, to bring about the existence of the liberal party and, consequently, the emergence of liberalism. José del Perojo “compares liberalism to the stage of youth in which one embarks on the path of life with strength and complete self-confidence” (Perojo, 1875, p. 301). He saw in liberalism the principle through which man can develop understanding and encourage criticism rather than destruction. He thought like

the Enlightenment thinkers who believed that liberating reason was a victory over ignorance and servitude through science. He trusted in achieving happiness through the rationalization of social structures. The liberal man is optimistic, hoping to know the essence of the world and transform whatever is possible.

He has clear plans and firm ideals. He is convinced that he can change society and create a better future for himself and others. He is an educated man of constant resolve. He approves everything without fear or levity. In liberalism, individuals develop and acquire their own qualities in a given social context. Del Perojo considered individuals to be unique beings who must forge their own path to achieve fulfillment. Through liberalism, man forges a new conception of the world and society, free from religious influence. He proposed solving problems through freedom of reasoning. He abandoned absolute and revealed truths, replacing the supernatural with the natural, the divine with the human, and the celestial with the earthly. Reason is the force that must be appealed to in order to transform the human world and lead it toward happiness and freedom.

Conservative Party

For José del Perojo, the conservative party is more secure and steadfast than the liberal party. "The conservative is like a man who is over thirty and approaching forty, busy maintaining what he acquired at an earlier age" (Perojo, 1875, p.310). His character is manly and active, neither effeminate nor receptive. In conservatism, man is not tormented by the past and has already established himself on more solid ground where he has adapted his way of life and is dedicated to constantly improving and developing it. Everything that exists in him is based on production and conservation, which applies to all objects, and the state is also governed by these laws.

These forces, which are also manifested in peoples, are understood under the names of liberal (creation) and conservative (preservation). Both are necessary in the political and scientific spheres, and in the natural and spiritual realms, nature demonstrates that this is what it wants. To achieve progress, we need both. In human life, it has been seen that these principles must run parallel to achieve balance in their application to politics. If human beings only focused on production, on creation, they would not be able

to live in peace, and if they only paid attention to conservation, then there would be no variety of objects.

Absolutism

José del Perojo "compares political absolutism to old age, stating that it is at a point where there is little left to do and it is approaching its end" (Perojo, 1875, p. 319). In old age, the productive nature of youth and its virility are not expected; natural law forces it to retreat and degenerate. If the conservative is distinguished by wisdom, the absolutist is distinguished by discretion. Absolutists tend to have business skills. The politics of the absolutist does not have the brilliance or depth of that of the conservative, the radical, or the liberal. It admits no other principle than that of immobility. Absolutism takes advantage of the fatigue and exhaustion that come from revolutions and wars, in which spirits are low, to establish itself.

This was the state of Europe when the Reformation took hold and absolute monarchies were established. According to him, the absolutism of the century in which he lived was reactionary, favoring the preservation of traditional political, social, and moral values and opposing reforms or changes that represented progress in society. Absolutism prioritizes the form of law over its spirit, views the progress of law with suspicion, and applies it when it suits it. In absolutism, there is no state or party that guides the people, but rather the state is identified with an individual who exercises sovereignty over it. It does not seek to impose control and influence the people in their customs and behaviors, but rather a divine law that no one can question and must obey, since no one can attain divine characters. The government exercises power according to his whims and desires. There is no separation of powers; they are concentrated in the figure of a single person, and abuses of power are very frequent, justified as reasons of state. The true ideal is absolute and theocratic monarchy.

About colonial politics

In his work on colonial politics, we see José del Perojo's neo-Kantian emancipatory thinking in his exposition of the notion of colonial politics. According to the author: "To sum up, colonizing is the act of educating a people in the new life of civilization; it is a form of social pedagogy" (Perojo, 1885, p.188). According to the Cuban philosopher, the emancipation of

humanity through colonization consists of the possibility for the colonized to emerge from their minority status. That is, from a state of infantile stagnation of thought in order to be able to improve themselves spiritually. Colonization offers the colonized the opportunity to change from a barbaric people to one with a refined understanding of manners, aesthetic, scientific, religious, pedagogical, and moral ideas.

What José del Perojo's emancipatory neo-Kantianism seeks to correct in this case is the predominance of metaphysics, assuming in colonial politics the ethnological principle that grants it the character of science, since neo-Kantianism reconciled natural and abstract laws. On the one hand, it belongs to anthropology, and on the other, it can be objectified through a verifiable law naturally contained in ethnology. The colonizing people encourage the conquered people to rise in terms of culture and progress. This process is carried out gradually and progressively. The colonized people do not have the capacity to break out of their mental immobility on their own. Therefore, they require the influence of a metropolis that allows them to change from an inferior nature to a superior one.

Reflection on pedagogy in José del Perojo's emancipatory neo-Kantian thought

Education and willpower

In the book *Ensayos sobre Educación* (Essays on Education), the regenerationist pedagogical philosophy can be seen in José del Perojo's neo-Kantian thinking, in which the objective of the pedagogical problem is: "a good education is precisely the source of good and perfection in life. Human nature cannot gradually approach its high goals of perfection and progress, but only through people gifted with feelings delicate enough to be interested in the good of the world and who feel capable of conceiving a better state, as perfectly possible, in the more or less near future" (Perojo, 1907, p. 41). For Perojo, education is a concern for the homeland and, ultimately, for children. A country lives, improves, and progresses because of its children. Political parties should be excluded from the field of education. Political parties revolve around ideology and seek to gain advantage through education. "It is only in the problem of education that the great secret of the perfection of human nature lies" (Perojo, 1907, p. 41).

He believed that the results of education cannot be expressed in figures, since education does not consist merely in the development of a skill or aptitude, as if the aim were to accumulate a more or less rich inventory for the memory: education encompasses the whole person, all their faculties, their entire being, fully and completely. Science is not what constitutes education, but rather the will, which is its soul: a firm and tenacious will in all that is honorable, beautiful, good, and true. In a word, education is the cultivation of the inner man.

Education and suggestion

According to Perojo: "Is man, yes or no, a suggestible being? And if man is suggestible, can anyone deny that children, that is, those being educated, are at least to the same degree, if not much more so, due to their young age? (Perojo, 1907, p. 59). For Perojo, nervous suggestion is a well-known fact. It is seen and known to work on sensitivity, intelligence, and will. Sensations, feelings, ideas, and volitions are suggested. An individual is made to suffocate from heat or freeze from cold, without altering the temperature of the room in which they are located. Active ideas and volitions are also suggested to them, in the same way that sensations are suggested. A hypnotized person is suggested ideas that they then carry out when they return to their normal state, believing that they are doing so spontaneously, and attributing to their own initiative what was suggested to them during their sleep. They believe that it is their own will, which is only that of the person who instilled it in them.

Education and instruction

José del Perojo said that: "before and above Instruction, which is directed only at the intellect, there is Education, which enters and fills the whole soul. Education is what shapes the heart, strengthens moral character, goodwill, and, consequently, educates, uplifts, and cultivates the spirit, all of which are much more important and essential than that with which it can be occupied and clogged" (Perojo, 1907, p. 82).

According to Perojo, instructing is not educating. And if Herbart identifies instruction and education, it is not in the sense that education is only the work of intellectual instruction, but rather that of the ideas that populate the spirit, ideas that are not the determinations of mental faculties, which Herbart finds repugnant and incompatible with his psychology, but rather

the factors that later produce the results that are improperly described as faculties. Thus, instruction is the means, the path to education, and Education is by no means instruction. The results of education cannot be expressed in figures, for it does not consist merely in the development of a faculty or an aptitude, as if the aim were to accumulate a more or less rich inventory for the memory: education encompasses the whole person, all their faculties, their entire being, fully and completely.

Education and national resurrection

José del Perojo stated that: “we also believe that the best definition is the one that popular sentiment assigns to the word itself. Thus, in all languages, the word ‘education’ has the same concept. He considered that the problem of education is also of interest to humanity, insofar as it maintains the degree of perfection that it has been able to achieve and drives and prepares it for further and more useful progress; it is of interest to science, the arts, and culture, in that it transmits to future generations the wealth and treasures that previous generations have accumulated in time and space, so that they may preserve, use, improve, and enrich them. Moreover, for a nation, as a collective entity that identifies and personifies the existence of a race, the life of a people, the embodiment of a common and unanimous sentiment, education is the issue on which not only its present state but also its final and definitive fate in history and geography depends.

Education and moral law

For José del Perojo: “without morality in the individual, it is impossible to achieve the general good of society, and moral progress, the only way, the only path to establish and ensure it, must be to never forget that rectification, individual reform, must be the guarantee of all social reform” (Perojo, 1907, p. 118). Perojo argued that although morality is one and the same for a given society, as long as it does not alter or modify its state and composition, which is at the same time contrary and opposed to the law of progress, to the principle of variation and to the very content of the moral ideal, which is always an incessant journey towards the greatest possible perfection, morality cannot and should not always be one, but varied and different from one period of history to another, from one people to another. What does not change, what does not vary, what

is the same, fixed, and eternal in all morality, in that of yesterday, in that of barbaric times, in that of today and tomorrow, in Christian and pagan morality, in positive and metaphysical morality, in agnostic and theological morality, is its end, its object, which is good, and its generating agent, which is duty.

Education and religion in the school

José del Perojo stated that: “we know very well that the issue of teaching religion in schools is, of all educational issues, the most difficult and complicated, fraught with inconveniences” (Perojo, 1907, p.147). According to Perojo, there are three major educational factors that people encounter in life: school, church, and family or home. Of these three factors, all of the contenders have gradually relegated them to an almost secondary, or at least passive, sphere. The third, that is, the family, has been reduced to almost no action, as if it had voluntarily abandoned its unquestionable right in favor of the other two major factors: school and church. Theoretically, or rather pedagogically, the family, on its own, does not act or believe it acts efficiently in the task of educating children, other than in what constitutes the supreme and decisive direction of the form and procedures it chooses in the education of its minors, delegating completely, once it has set its absolute will in a certain direction, to the other two living educational factors.

Education and non-religious schools

For José del Perojo: “A secular school is, or should be, a school in which all religious instruction, whether specific or unspecific, is ignored. All special teaching, acts, symbols, or manifestations are completely dispensed with” (Perojo, 1907, p. 197). For Perojo, in essence, and this is the essential and characteristic point to note, a secular school is not synonymous with an atheist school, and even less so with an anti-religious school. In this school, for the reasons and causes set out above, no religious instruction is given, but neither is there any anti-religious propaganda, no discussion of any rites, no work against any religion, nor is its aim to uproot children’s religious feelings and inclinations, counteracting and contradicting them in any way, nor does it attempt to extirpate and kill them in their souls in order to replace them with other dogmas or principles of a different nature.

According to Perojo, God is not omitted from books or texts used in history, literature, and art, provided that the occasion and place, through words or concepts, bring His name to the mind and lips of the teacher or child. Everyone must necessarily be taught mutual tolerance and common respect for churches, cults, and religions. In short, none of this is unknown, even if it is not taught or practiced, and even less so is any religion preached against or propagated against, declaring it incompatible with the form of government existing in the country.

Physical education, hygiene, and morals

José del Perojo reflected that: "We do not want to conclude our task without pointing out, even if only very superficially, the extremely important role that physical education plays in education. It is as important and significant as mental and moral education, which are widely recognized and accepted. It is so important because it constitutes the fundamental basis, the decisive principle that must be reflected and applied in the other two types of education. It is more than just the foundation that must bear the dead weight of the other two, because its importance is not simply passive, as if it were only the support on which the other two must rest, but at the same time, the agent, the promoter of everything that the others can actually produce and form" (Perojo, 1907, p. 241).

Perojo reflected that when the problem of education is considered and contemplated with the eyes of the soul fixed on a nation whose vital situation shows clear signs of alarming decline, and even on a people who, fortunately for them, are not in this state, it soon becomes clear that the whole problem of education and its process are nothing more at its core, the execution and fulfillment of an essentially biological function, which, although apparently limited to the child, to the individual, is nothing more than the necessary instrument with which those large collectivities called peoples or nations mysteriously carry out their own instruction; that is, their incessant renewal, their progressive reconstruction, in the same way and manner that, in another form, through the individual, the species also secretly manages to reproduce and perpetuate itself.

One weakness of José del Perojo's neo-Kantian regenerationist thinking is that he could also have taken into account that, according to Karl Marx, material fact is the determining factor in the long process of qualitative changes that

subsequently lead to quantitative changes; that is, from the natural to the social. The active nature of human beings always appears in all aspects of this process. In *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man*, Friedrich Engels pointed out the important role of praxis in the emergence of man and society.

Productive praxis, which materially transforms nature (this refers to work), brings human beings into active contact with nature and allows them to humanize it. Karl Marx would also argue that by transforming nature, man also transforms himself. Through material praxis, human beings educate their senses, develop language, perfect their movements and manipulations, accumulate experiences, and transmit them to other human beings for history, in order to relate to each other and understand the world around them.

Kant had the great merit, according to Hegel, of having proclaimed the subjectivity of the individual as such, his internal moral autonomy as the ultimate foundation of his freedom. The legality-morality dichotomy serves precisely to distinguish the external actions of men from their innermost intentions, subjective motives, moral conscience, and all that inner life that cannot be grasped in social or legal categories and on which the ultimate foundation of freedom ultimately rests.

With Kant's view of morality, the freedom of the individual as such came to be proclaimed as a universal principle. What was only a beginning in Greece finds its true fulfillment in this doctrine: the recognition of the universal principle of subjective freedom constitutes the midpoint and turning point in the difference between Antiquity and Modernity. Human beings in the Modern Age already knew at that time that all men are free, and from then on, that awareness would necessarily underlie, as its substance, all institutions and all laws.

However, Hegel criticizes Kant for separating morality from legality; ethics from law; moral intention from the reality of human actions; thus separating the essential unity that links subjective moral interiority with external social and political reality. According to Hegel, Kant dissolved the Greek ethical viewpoint, for which ethics and politics formed a substantial unity and in which moral duty was inseparable from historical and social reality. If the Greeks were ethical but not moral men for Hegel, Kant's

modern man would be a moral but not an ethical man. Faced with Kant, who wanted to base his entire moral system, completely independently of sensory experience, on abstract principles that were valid *a priori*, Hegel exposed, in the very process of history, the long and difficult work carried out by that principle of freedom that Kant sought to establish abstractly. "Kantian linguistic expressions prefer to use the term morality, just as the practical principles of that philosophy are limited solely to this concept and render the point of view of ethics impossible; rather, they expressly annihilate and disdain it" (Hegel, 1968, p. 66).

Para Hegel, la realización del concepto de libertad significa que el sujeto deja de existir como individuo y se ve a sí mismo como un ser al margen y diferente del mundo. El sujeto comprenderá el mundo subjetivo en su totalidad al abandonar su propia subjetividad en el proceso de superar la objetividad del mundo exterior. El cumplimiento de esta condición es lo que constituye para Hegel la realización definitiva de la libertad; reuniendo el mundo en la mente del sujeto, lo elimina como fuerza extraña y restrictiva. Según Hegel, «el hombre crea y busca en el pensamiento su libertad y el fundamento de la ética» (Hegel, 1968, p. 26).

Hegel pointed out that the origin of freedom is, therefore, the will of man, because man, as a rational creature, has the power to give effect to his thoughts. For Hegel, the very notion of will implies that of freedom. The freedom of the will knows no limits and can be entirely abstracted from the outside world, concentrating solely on the inner life of the self. This negative freedom of understanding, as Hegel calls it, finds its expression in destruction: destruction of the true nature of the self as a social being in the fanaticism of pure self-contemplation; destruction of the self as the ultimate act of self-will; or finally, as religious and political acts of destruction directed against the entire existing social order. The deduction that the will is free and what will and freedom are, as has been noted, can only take place in connection with the whole. The foundations of this premise, that is, that the Spirit is, above all, Intelligence and that the determinations by which it advances in its development from feeling to thought, through representation, are the path to producing itself as will, which, like practical Spirit in general, is the next truth of intelligence" (Hegel, 1968, p.47).

CONCLUSIONS

The overall objective of this research was to identify the distinction between Neo-Kantian hermeneutic thought and the political and pedagogical regenerationist philosophy of José del Perojo y Figueras, which has been only partially studied by the international academic community. Perojo's hermeneutic Neo-Kantian thought is based on his exposition of this movement, which includes an interpretation of what has been said and omitted, his contributions and comments on the elements that should be essential to the movement, and a critique of the mistakes that were made. This author's political and educational philosophy of regeneration is linked to the ideological movement that, between the 19th and 20th centuries, reflected on the prostration of the Spanish nation and sought to put an end to Spain's decline.

The study made it possible to draw connections to other similar studies and contexts based on general insights found in the theoretical sources of Neo-Kantianism. The following theoretical approaches were identified within the study of José del Perojo y Figueras's neo-Kantian regenerationalist political and pedagogical thought: the Radical Party, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, absolutism, the psychological principle in politics, colonial policy, and the pedagogical problem. José del Perojo's philosophical conception finds in Neo-Kantianism the purpose of contributing to the emancipation of the human being within the complexity of a global process amid the diversity of values and ideologies.

José del Perojo's work consisted of developing a theory of knowledge and moral action based on scientific naturalism in conjunction with Kant's philosophical theory of the active role of the subject. While Immanuel Kant presented all the elements of knowledge and moral action in a speculative, anti-historicist theoretical framework, Perojo did so through naturalism, which can be demonstrated through research into psychological processes. Psychological experience reveals the subjective and anthropological universals shared by human beings, which can be demonstrated to the scientific community. Perojo's philosophical thought was framed within epistemological idealism.

The subjective universal is found through the laws of nature, which are deduced from the ways in which all human beings act toward objects. This reinterpretation of Kantian theory aimed to be realistic and consistent with the Neo-Kantian doctrine of eliminating the predominance of metaphysics in this theory. According to Perojo, the determinism required by philosophical thought to explain human knowledge must be conceived through naturalism as an expression of scientific realism. The objectification of the world is more accurate if achieved in this way, since excessive speculation prevents consensus about its truth and existence.

He acknowledged that there are hereditary factors in human beings—predispositions and potential aptitudes for cognitive activity—which have a biological basis; however, their role should not be overstated in all aspects of this activity, since there is also an objective reality consisting of external factors that give rise to specific patterns of knowledge and learning frameworks in humans. For Perojo, genetic factors and external factors constitute a single, indivisible process. Both are decisive.

The original forms of knowledge can be shown through activity in the environment and the relationship with the objects that confront the subject. During the exchange of stimuli, the psychophysical world and these forms, which constitute the components of the overall process, are interconnected. For Perojo's neo-Kantian doctrine, a functional and structural change in knowledge does not have to be imposed solely from a genetic standpoint, because if it were, the diversity of values and ideologies could not be explained. The acquisition and progressive development of individuals' cognitive capacities is not merely a unilateral determination, but rather a complex, global process.

Furthermore, José del Perojo asserted that the state and political parties are understood and defined through human nature. Human development is expressed in different characters and spirits. This same phenomenon manifests itself in political parties, and its natural consequence is individual nature as a psychological organization. He bases his assertion on this, arguing that there is a predisposition for political ideas within human beings. This is the origin of parties as associations of public interest that operate according to certain principles and ideas. The idea of a party is different from that

of a faction; it is part of a whole and represents a specific aspect of society. Through them, the concerns of the population are conveyed to the government, and the government's decisions are conveyed to the population. Life in society is a natural impulse of humankind; but it requires organization and order—that is, it needs to be regulated and governed.

According to Perojo, political parties are necessary expressions, manifestations of the internal currents that drive the political life of nations, and their presence is indispensable because without them there is no internal life. Political parties are only a part of the nation and cannot be identified with the whole, which would be the people, the State. Political parties are always in opposition to one another, and each exists because of the presence of the other. The historical ontology of humanity must abandon all projects that claim to be radical.

Finally, regarding Regenerationism and the issue of education, Perojo argued that education is the grand undertaking of reconstituting and rebuilding a devastated people, grounding this thesis in a new system of universal, compulsory, and free education that would lift Spain out of the state of prostration it was suffering. With regard to the depression afflicting Spain's national spirit, as well as the moral and civic crisis it was undergoing, education would serve to lift the fallen spirit and set straight the people's troubled ideas in order to achieve the greatest triumph a person can attain in life: victory, mastery over oneself. In this author's view, experimental psychology, psychophysiology, physiology proper, and the anatomy of the brain centers have not only failed to undermine the prestige of the pedagogical sciences, but on the contrary, with their new advances and recent discoveries, they serve to strengthen the essential principle—the foundation upon which all their authority and efficacy rest—namely, the certain and effective reality of their influence on the will, thereby ensuring and affirming the full educational efficacy of pedagogical work.

Limitations

Among the limitations of the study is the need to expand the dialogue of these expressions of Del Perojo's thought identified in his work with the conceptions that came after him, so that an updated perception of the real influence of his thought can be achieved.

Future Research

Future research could focus on expanding this study by examining the actual influence of this author's philosophical thought on the current landscape of contemporary philosophy, as a way to explore the significance of his work in shaping subsequent philosophical thought.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest that have influenced or affected the results of this research.

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