

EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROGRESSIVE EDUCATOR

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ORIGINAL TITLE

Eugenio María de Hostos: Progressive Education
in Nineteenth-Century Caribbean
and Latin America on the Fringe of Empires

"If anything in this world is in need of radical revolution, it is the educational system. The system is privileged when it is accessible to only part of society; incomplete when it is based on the particular development of certain faculties or the training of specialists for specific individual goals. In both cases it is faulty, in both cases harmful to freedom and civilization, in both cases contrary to human nature."

E. M. Hostos, *The Cuban Problem*, 1874.¹

In the year 2000, Julia Alvarez published *In the Name of Salomé*,² a book of historical fiction that tells the story of the life and work of Salomé Ureña. Ureña was a noted nineteenth century Dominican poet, who played a major role in the educational reforms led by Eugenio María de Hostos in Santo Domingo in the 1880s.³ Through the novel, Alvarez, a Dominican

- 1→ Eugenio María de Hostos, *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, ed. Manuel Maldonado-Denis, trans. Vivian Otero and Shannon Lachicotte (San Juan, Puerto Rico: jointly published by the Office of Cultural Development of the City of San Juan, City University of New York, and the Institute of Hostosian Studies, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, San Juan, 1992), 182.
- 2→ Julia Alvarez, *In the Name of Salome* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, 2000).
- 3→ Unfortunately, Ureñas's work has been sparsely translated into English. See Daisy Cocco de Filippis and Sonia Rivera-Valdés, eds. *Documents of Dissidence: Selected Writings of Dominican Women* (New York: Compass Comps, 2000). For literary criticism and biographical information in Spanish see Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Salomé Ureña y el Instituto de Señoritas; para la historia de la espiritualidad dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Academia Dominicana de la Historia, 1960); Silveria R. de Rodríguez Demorizi, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta López, 1944), <http://www.cielonaranja.com/salome-bio.pdf>; Sherezada Vicioso, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez (1850-1897): a cien años de un magisterio* (Santo

feminist author, connects with her roots and celebrates the influence of Hostos, a Puerto Rican educator, humanist, and intellectual-activist. This paper examines, from a historical perspective, his contributions to education in Chile, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and his native Puerto Rico.

Salomé Ureña's nationalist poems were written at a time when her country, Santo Domingo (as it was known then), was profoundly fragmented by anarchy and instability. The chaos that reigned for more than three decades was caused by the competing warring factions of various *caudillos* and by the imperial designs of the European colonial powers and the United States. Salomé's love poems are daring in ways that are not so obvious these days, as they break through the repression and self-censorship that resulted from the prevailing social mores. She wrote poetry in a country at war with itself and in a society that imposed clear limits on what women were allowed to say publicly about their feelings. A nationalist, she aligned herself with the Liberals, who opposed annexation to the United States and worked for the creation of a modern state with democratic institutions, including a state-supported educational system. The Liberals that Hostos and Salomé associated with were radical agents for political and social change, situated at the opposite end from their Neoliberal successors.⁴

Salomé became an important voice in support of her *patria*, and her writings evoked and affirmed nationhood. Furthermore, her commitment to the advancement of women was highly significant. As a result, Hostos, who had lectured on the right of women to a scientific education during his sojourn to Chile in 1873, recruited Salomé to become

Domingo: Comisión Permanente de la Feria del Libro, 1997); Diógenes Céspedes, *Salomé Ureña y Hostos* (Santo Domingo: Biblioteca Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 2002); Jacobo Moquete de la Rosa, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez en el sector educación* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Superior de Formación Docente Salomé Ureña, 2008).

4 → Nineteenth-century Liberalism in Latin America was an anti-clerical and republican political force that could span diverse views. It often represented urban interests versus the landed aristocracies, and in some instances, radical Liberals assumed anti-imperialist and feminist positions. In a number of countries, including Chile, Argentina, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, liberals were involved in the tasks of creating national institutions in the newly-independent countries.

one of his collaborators. She became the co-director of the *Instituto de Señoritas* (School for Young Women), which they co-founded in 1881, and which six years later would be promoted to a normal school.⁵

Alvarez's characterization of Hostos in the novel is discreet but powerful. In her narrative, the young Dominican reformers refer to Hostos as *Maestro* or *Apostle*. Salomé's admiration for Hostos in the novel is sublimated and depicted in moral terms. This attraction probably owes to Hostos's charisma, imbued with a heightened sense of ethics and commitment. As she reflects on her situation, she realizes how odd it seems:

And so I, too, began to listen closely to what Hostos had to say. I was in moral love—does that make sense? A moral love that took over my senses and lightly touched my whole body with an exquisite excitement whenever the apostle was in the room.⁶

The admiration was mutual. When Salomé died of consumption in 1897, Hostos, then living in Santiago de Chile, wrote a eulogy praising her contributions. These are the words of the historical Hostos:

Salomé Ureña de Henríquez was not content with being a poet and

5 → Normal schools, also called teachers colleges, were instituted to train teachers for various levels of instruction. They can be traced back to 1685, where, in Reims, France, Jean Batiste de La Salle founded what is considered the first such school. They derive their name from their purpose: to establish teaching standards, or norms. According to Alicia Itatí Palermo, the first normal schools in Latin America were founded in 1822, in Lima, and 1825, in Buenos Aires, following Lancaster's model, but they did not last. See "Mujeres profesionales que ejercieron en Argentina en el siglo XIX", *Convergencia. Revista de sociología* 12, no. 38: (2005) 59-79; cited by Sonia Ruiz Pérez, "Línea de tiempo. Desarrollo del concepto de la escuela normal," in *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Mayagüez: Impresos RUM, 2013). Originally the normal schools in the United States and Latin America trained teachers for primary education in public schools. They evolved to include institutions for training secondary-education teachers, such as the Instituto Pedagógico de Chile (1890), and the Instituto Nacional de Profesorado Secundario, in Argentina (1904). In the U.S., a number of normal schools became teachers colleges. See Edgar Ewing Brandon, *Latin-American Universities and Special Schools* (Washington: G.P.O., 1913).

6 → Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé*, 172.

a patriot through the use of words, but she also practiced her poetic enthusiasm and patriotic devotion, dedicating herself body and soul to the saddest and most arduous of society's tasks, but also the most transcending one: she devoted herself to teaching.

Naturally, she was not going to be an ordinary teacher, so she took upon herself the task of contributing to the educational reform that was then taking place amidst great hardships to the reformers. This reform, applied to the education of women, gave a useful and fruitful occupation to that noble soul, who was so eager to improve the lot of others.⁷

In his short piece, Hostos evoked⁸ Salomé's role as a mother, a ministry that he claimed enhanced her standing and was intertwined with her pedagogical and literary undertakings. His remarks would be hardly surprising in any Hispanic society, in which motherhood is ritually glorified. But they also echoed Heinrich Pestalozzi's views on the major influence of mothers on the educational and emotional development of children.⁹

However, the word "wife" was nowhere to be found in Hostos's eulogy, and this signaled a different outlook that grants full professional and individual autonomy to women. Instead, the phrasing related to Hostos's thinking about the condition and status of women: "the miseducation of women in Latin America," women becoming "better owners of themselves," and "more knowledgeable about the fate of women in society." These were some of the major themes in his persistent campaign to empower women through education.

Alvarez's novel then is about the need to connect with key foundational elements of "Dominican-ness." It is about ideas and struggles that helped to shape the nation and that—she seems to say—still reverberate into its future: popular education, nationalism, nation-building, gender equality, social and intellectual development. Ethics, politics, history are part of the story.

7 → Eugenio María de Hostos, "Salomé Ureña," in *Hostos en Santo Domingo*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 2004), vol. II, 101-104. Unless otherwise stated, I will be using my translations from Spanish.

8 → I have chosen to sidestep the convention of the literary present in most cases throughout this paper, except when discussing contemporary texts, to avoid its incongruous proximity with the historical past.

9 → Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children; Pestalozzi's Educational Writings* (University of Michigan, 1977). See particularly Parts III and IV.

While the novel depicts Hostos as an inspirational figure, we do not learn much about him in the narrative. What we do learn is that Hostos is a major character in Dominican history, a powerful educator, and a legendary intellectual that needs to be reckoned with. The reckoning involves a recovery of Hostos's contributions to education. It is also a response to the undermining of the major role that public institutions and national identities have historically played in Latin America, in the face of a neoliberal perspective that has produced and popularized a tendentious bias against them.

A BRIEF NOTE ON HOSTOS'S POLITICAL INITIATION

Hostos (1839-1903) was born and brought up in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. The island was then one of the few remaining Spanish possessions, and Hostos would devote most of his adult life to ending colonialism in Cuba and in his native country. At age 12, he was sent to Bilbao, Spain, where he received his secondary education at the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza. He started law school at the Universidad Central de Madrid in 1860, but did not finish his degree. However, he was exposed to the progressive philosophy of Karl Friedrich Krause through the writings and lectures of Professor Julián Sanz del Río. Krause's thinking was republican, anti-monarchic, abolitionist, and supportive of women's education. It purported that education could transform individuals and societies and that harmony could be attained through ethical conduct.¹⁰ Krause's philosophy was a major influence on Hostos and left an important mark on the new generation of Spanish educational and political reformers.¹¹ Hostos also became immersed in the political and intellectual debates taking place in *El Ateneo*—an important center of literary and political discussions—and in the Spanish press.

10 → Karl Krause, *El ideal de la humanidad para la vida*, trans. J. Sánz del Río (Madrid: Orbis, 1985).

11 → Among his notable disciples were Nicolás Salmerón, José María Labra, Segismundo Moret, and Francisco Giner de los Ríos. The latter would later found the important *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, in Madrid, in 1876. See Antonio Jiménez García, *El krausismo y la institución libre de enseñanza* (Madrid: Editorial Cincel, 1985).

In Madrid and Barcelona, Hostos earned a living as a journalist and wrote articles that argued for the recognition of the political rights of Cuba and Puerto Rico. He supported the Liberal leaders, who helped to depose the monarchy and establish the first Spanish republic in 1868. However, Hostos had expected that the new republican government would seek a dignified and democratic solution to the grievances of the Antilles. But there was little support for restructuring Spain's relationship with its colonies and establishing a non-colonial federation, similar to the British-Canadian model that had just been installed and that Hostos favored. Soon he became disappointed with the new regime and left for New York, where he would support the Cuban war for independence and would try to promote an anti-colonial revolution in Puerto Rico.

HOSTOS'S JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY THROUGHOUT SOUTH AMERICA

After he spent a year in New York, in October 1870, at age 31, Hostos initiated a journey throughout Latin America that had a critical impact on his views and ideas. His observations and insights of that journey are collected in two memorable volumes of his *Obras completas: Mi viaje al sur* and *Temas sudamericanos*,¹² in which he demonstrates his commitment to a Latin-americanist agenda on a regional scale. As the trip unfolded, he became the most inclusive nineteenth century Latin American thinker, an early advocate in the struggle for human rights, and a precursor of continental unity. One of the initiatives that he tried to advance from this Latin-americanist perspective was a diplomatic conference on Cuba. Peruvian president Manuel Pardo seemed inclined to support the idea, but the proposal made little headway.

As he traveled South, Hostos became a voice for the marginalized in Latin America, his vision of humanity rooted in a profound sense of

12 → Eugenio María de Hostos, *Obras completas*, segunda edición, facimular de la conmemorativa del Centenario (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1969), tomo VI (*Mi viaje al sur*) and VII (*Temas sudamericanos*) (respectively).

ethics and justice. From 1871 to 1872, Hostos lived in Perú, where he again worked as a journalist and denounced the oppressive working conditions of Chinese indentured servants and *cholos*, or *mestizos*, and argued for enfranchising them.¹³

THE FIRST CHILEAN VISIT: ON THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY ABOUT WOMEN

The next stop in Hostos's journey was Chile. During his stay in that country, admission of women to the state university generated a public debate on the rights of women. Martina Barrios had just translated John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women*.¹⁴ In December of 1872, Antonia Tarragó, director of the Colegio de Santa Teresa, a school for women, submitted a petition to the Board of the University of Chile to allow her students to take the qualifying exams. This petition would not be addressed by the Education Minister, Manuel Luis Amunátegui, until 1877. However, soon after submission it triggered an important discussion on the intellectual merits of women and whether they should be granted admission to the university.¹⁵

Hostos decided to enter the fray. He delivered a two-part lecture at the Academy of Fine Letters in Santiago on "The Scientific Education of Women," in which he vigorously defended the right of women to a scientific education. He commented extensively on their marginalized condition and placed responsibility squarely on men:

[W]e, men, who monopolize the forces that we almost never know how to use in a fair way; we, who monopolize the social power that we almost always handle with a weak hand; we, who legislate laws for ourselves,

13 → Hostos, "El cholo," in *Obras completas*, tomo VII (*Temas sudamericanos*), 152-155.

14 → It was published as "La esclavitud de la mujer" in the influential magazine *La Revista de Santiago* in 1872.

15 → See Sonia Ruiz Pérez, "Intervenciones a favor de la educación de la mujer. Chile 1872-1877" in *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2013).

for the masculine sex, to our liking, recklessly leaving out half of the human race; we, are responsible for the evils that are caused by our continuous violation of the elemental laws of nature.¹⁶

He called women's rights "the issue of our times," and observed that women were the most significant factor for change in Latin America.

In this lecture, Hostos laid out three basic arguments to support his views on women's right to a scientific education:

- 01 Women are rational beings. So the equality of men and women is a law of nature. To deprive women of their right to develop their reasoning and educate their intelligence violates their integrity as rational beings and the laws of nature.
- 02 There are very important social benefits that would be obtained by preparing women to perform their roles as mothers and first-teachers. Women are the first teachers of our children. Therefore, the more knowledgeable they become, the better teachers they will be, and the better off their children will be also, a Pestalozzian idea that can be found in *The Education of Gertrude's Children*.
- 03 Since women are their spouse's companions, education would make them intellectual partners.

In the ensuing years, Hostos's views on women would deepen to take into account and bring forth women's own sense of themselves and their particular needs and aspirations as individuals. So in 1881, while he was discussing the creation of the Institute for Young Women in Santo Domingo, he added a crucial fourth argument:

16 → Hostos, "La educación científica de la mujer," in *Obras completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 10. See also Yolanda Ricardo, "Estudio preliminar," in *Hostos y la mujer* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2001), 3-138. Gabriela Mora, prologue to *La educación científica de la mujer* by Eugenio María de Hostos, (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1972); and Ramonita Brea, "Una nueva lectura de Hostos: dos textos feministas relegados al olvido," in *La educación científica de la mujer* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Archivo General de la Nación, 2007), 9-41.

- 04 Women's individuality needs to be recognized. By means of an education, they could better fulfill themselves as individuals.

In the lecture that Hostos gave in Chile, he insisted that knowing the laws of nature would enable women to be treated equally, and that knowing the laws of life would allow them to be in command of their rationality. He then proposed a series of lectures that would provide scientific instruction to women, based on the educational model that Auguste Comte had proposed for men. There is no record of this program of lectures having taken place, but it followed Hostos's known practice of putting forth a plan of action to redress injustices.

Hostos's lecture provoked a public letter by Luis Rodríguez Velasco in the Chilean press, defending traditional views on women. Hostos responded vigorously, while avoiding any personal attacks—a principle that he maintained throughout his life. He started out with a cordial gesture: “Señor Rodríguez Velasco: Let me exchange the vocative señor for that of amigo. I greet you, extend my hand, and respond.”¹⁷ Then he got to the crux of his argument:

The education of women should be scientific, since it should be rational, as it relates to rational beings, and it should be complete, as it relates to beings who have more than feelings.

[S]ince [women] are rational beings, they are men's equals; if men have the right to improve their moral and physical life by cultivating their faculties, why shouldn't women have the same right? Men have the right to liberate themselves from error, why shouldn't women have that right as well? Men have the right to know the universe face-to-face, why shouldn't women have it too?¹⁸

Ultimately, Hostos considered the denial of women's right to an education as an act of repression and violence against their integrity, equivalent to amputating a physical organ:

17 → Hostos, “Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco,” *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 34.

18 → *Ibid.*, 45-46.

As half of humanity, they are the coefficient of human life in all its manifestations; to impair their exercise of the highest manifestations of their souls is to suppress violently one of the factors pertaining to the phenomenon of life. Before becoming loved ones, wives, mothers; before being the charm of our days, women as women, are rational beings who use reason to exercise, educate, and know the reality that surrounds them; to deny them knowledge of that reality is to deny them a rational life, it amounts to killing a part of their life.¹⁹

He supported his arguments with clear statements about women's humanity and did not shy away from confronting the distorted, uninformed, or uncouth expressions of sexism leveled against assertive women:

Women should be educated so that they can be human beings, so that they can cultivate and develop their faculties, so that they can exercise their reasoning, so that they can enjoy in their lives the full use of conscience, and not just assume in their social life the restrictive functions assigned to them. The more human that they will know to be and feel, the more womanly they will want to and know how to be.²⁰

When he gave his 1873 lecture in Santiago de Chile, Hostos was not yet a teacher. But he was already lured by the impact of education on people's lives and was already asking what education ought to be: "Before and above everything else, isn't education about growth and reflection?"²¹ His journey, which also included Argentina and Brazil, proved to be an initiation to the region's complex and diverse societies and a grounding for future undertakings. He would come to realize that in spite of half-a-century of independence, decolonization in the independent countries would require a major reorientation in their educational institutions and social practices.

19 → Ibid., 53.

20 → Hostos, "La educación científica de la mujer," in *Obras Completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 12-13.

21 → Hostos, "Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco," in *Obras Completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 54.

CALIBÁN'S BECKONING

In the spring of 1874, after three-and-a-half years of travel, Hostos returned to New York City, where he tried to reignite the struggle against Spanish rule in his native Puerto Rico. It is revealing how Hostos arrived at the awareness of the need for an educational transformation as he reflected on the issue of colonialism. While largely engaged in political and journalistic activities, he pondered how to transform the colonial societies devoid of “reasonable and conscientious people.”²² The first point on his agenda was to provide education to all:

[I]t is the time to be concerned and admit to ourselves that we will do nothing to build a society worthy of the goals expected of an Antillean society, if the education of the people (women, children, black, brown, rich, poor, peasants) does not produce in them a general reaction against all the formidable vices of their previous educational experience.²³

Then he proposed a universalist program that would widen horizons and break open the closed boundaries of colonial, religious, and undemocratic education prevalent in the two islands:

It is therefore the first and last objective of our future education to put to use the primary faculties of the spirit. [...], to provide the students with a universal order more secure, harmonious, and sound than the one invented by religion, literature, and tyranny.²⁴

Hostos had not yet found a methodology or a conceptual framework that he thought would enable the Antillean societies to transform themselves. This would come later, as he became more vested in creating institutions that could promote social change.

For the next two years, from 1875-1876, Hostos alternated between

22 → Eugenio María de Hostos, “The Cuban Problem” *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 183.

23 → *Ibid.*, 182.

24 → *Ibid.*, 182-83.

New York and Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo, where he worked with General Gregorio Luperón and with Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances to attain the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico and to create an Antillean Confederation. During Hostos's two stays in Puerto Plata he published three different newsletters that were all closed down by the government: "Las Tres Antillas," "Las Dos Antillas," and "Los Antillanos." In March, 1876, a month before he was forced to leave the country for the second time, he started an organization with Luperón called *La Educadora*. This was perhaps his first attempt at adult education and a way of promoting republicanism. Its objective was to foster an understanding of the constitutions of the United States and Latin American countries. Soon thereafter, the Spanish government complained to the Dominican President Ignacio María González about the conspiratorial activities of the Cuban and Puerto Rican political émigrés and pressed for Hostos's expulsion. In April of that year, as he was being expelled from the country, he reflected on education in his customary unflinching manner:

But not on account of my being absent, will I stop having the preoccupation that I have, have had, and will always have for the education of the people, which is an illumination of the collective consciousness, and I want my last words to be a prayer for what has so much and so unceasingly been my preoccupation.²⁵

Hostos's "preoccupation" for "the education of the people" would become a lifelong passion for human development as well as social and political change. He had realized early on that decolonization would not be possible without major reforms and that the only means to bring it about was through education:

A dense fog, a great deal of darkness is left by the effect of a colonial education on the colonized; there is but one—and only one—means for reforming the deformed human soul. In the language of speakers and poets, that means is called light; in the words of thinkers and statesmen, it is called education.²⁶

25 → Santiago Castro Ventura, *Hostos en el perímetro dominicano* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Editorial Manatí, 2003), 26.

26 → Hostos, "The Cuban Problem," *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 182.

It is not surprising that his political work in the ensuing years led him in that direction.

ON GETTING MARRIED AND BECOMING A TEACHER IN VENEZUELA

After Hostos was expelled for the second time from Puerto Plata in 1876, he returned briefly to New York and, shortly thereafter, left for Caracas, Venezuela. There he met and married María Belinda Ayala, a young Cuban woman from an exiled family. This is also where he became an educator—probably out of necessity—to support his marriage. It is worth mentioning that while he was in Caracas, on December 30, 1876, he delivered the keynote at the inauguration of Venezuela's Second Normal School, attended by President Antonio Guzmán Blanco, and ended his speech expressing the need for the creation of a normal school for women, a harbinger of things to come.

In 1877, he assumed the directorship of Colegio Nacional de la Asunción, equivalent to a high school, in Isla Margarita, and lived there for several months with his wife Ina. They then moved to the city of Puerto Cabello, where he was director of the Instituto de Comercio and professor at Colegio Nacional of that city. While living in Venezuela, he explored a deepening interest in both pedagogical theory and the emerging social sciences. In 1877, he was among the founders of the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales, one of the first of its kind in Latin America. A few months later, in January of 1878, Hostos proposed the creation of a school of “objective learning” to the Puerto Cabello City Council, in which we get a glimpse of his pedagogical ideas: “Knowledge is acquired as much through the senses as by means of abstract reasoning. Thus, and without going any further, the need to educate the senses.”²⁷ His views were inspired by Pestalozzi's ideas and based on scientific thinking and observation. He rejected metaphysics and theology, and included esthetic and moral qualities as educable aptitudes.

The school did not materialize, since Hostos was being harassed by authorities and decided to leave Venezuela. He had written an article

27 → Hostos, “Carta al Consejo Municipal de Puerto Cabello,” in *Hostos en Venezuela*, ed. Oscar Urdaneta Sambrano (Caracas, Venezuela: La Casa de Bello, 1989), 171-173.

that reflected negatively on former strongman Guzmán Blanco, who had been reinstated to the presidency after the mysterious death of his successor, President Francisco Linares Alcántara. Nevertheless, Hostos had begun to explore pedagogical theories, particularly the ways in which teaching and learning take place.

Hostos was also deepening his political and cultural views and commitment to what we would now call “Bolivarismo” or pan-Americanism: a utopian political concept that originated in Bolívar’s writings and was also prominent in José Martí’s thinking, and which is still central to Latin American radical politics. In a letter to social scientist José María Samper, Hostos elaborated:

[C]onsidering all of América my patria, I try to be useful to it in any parcel of American land where I may be staying. [...] all of my life’s purpose, all the painful writings of advocacy during my active years, and all of my efforts of understanding, of the will, and of the heart, have been oriented towards attaining the total independence of our continent and its moral and intellectual emancipation [...]²⁸

THE ESCUELA NORMAL AND THE INSTITUTO DE SEÑORITAS

After the *Paz del Zanjón*, the peace agreement of 1878 that effectively ended Cuba’s Ten Year War, Hostos tried to visit his father and his family in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. He seemed to be considering returning to his homeland, but his father sent him word not to disembark, since the Spanish authorities were planning to arrest him. So he continued his trip to Santo Domingo.

In Santo Domingo, the *Liberales*—or *los Azules*, as they were called—had become a force. After winning an election in 1879 and enduring a coup that deposed the reformist president Ulyses Espaillat, they gained control of the government with enough staying power to undertake important political and educational reforms. General Gregorio

28 → Hostos, Carta a José María Samper, in *Hostos en Venezuela*, ed. Óscar Urdaneta Sambrano, 169.

Luperón, one of the heroes of the Dominican War of Restoration and a strong opponent to the U.S. annexation attempt during Buenaventura Báez's regime, became provisional president in 1879 and sought Hostos's collaboration in organizing the country's educational system. This is when Hostos and Salomé Ureña met.

The creation of normal schools was not an original idea, but it lured educators because it was a way to professionalize education and to reform it through teacher training. Luperón asked Hostos to direct and develop this initiative, and he left a powerful imprint during the nine years that he was in charge of it. In 1880 he founded the Escuela Normal in the capital city of Santo Domingo, and the following year, he founded another one in Santiago de los Caballeros.

There would be roadblocks along the way, especially by a conservative and powerful Catholic Church that was being displaced from its control of education. It accused Hostos of fostering atheism through his plan of secular, rationalist, and scientifically-based education. This was—the Church claimed— *la escuela sin Dios* (the Godless school). Hostos, however, was adept at negotiating these obstacles by tailoring his ideas to the Dominican context. The pantheism present in the Chilean lecture dissipated as he learned to moderate his anti-clericalism. His verve, his fulfilling family life (four of his six children were born during that decade), his intellect, and moral certitude made him a formidable leader. He excelled at the opportunity to have an impact on a society that was dear to him. He succeeded in preparing competent, civics-oriented teachers. Moreover, his work led to the creation of *Normalismo*, a movement that offered a forum for developing leaders and for discussing the educational agenda.

Appointing Salomé Ureña co-director of the Instituto de Señoritas was clearly an act of empowerment. By challenging the prevalent perception that underrated women's leadership capability and intellectual worth, Hostos proved to be consistent with his beliefs. Although limited in scope, creating the school had a multiplying effect that spread education among women. Some of its graduates founded other schools and promoted education at all levels, which increased the pressure to provide professional opportunities for women. Among the 1902 graduates was Andrea Evangelina Rodríguez, the first Dominican female medical doctor.

Hostos's interests included early childhood education. In 1884 he founded a kindergarten, supported through donations, that emphasized games and activities to engage children physically and in sensorial perception. Choral singing and coloring helped to develop esthetic appreciation. In contemporary educational terms, this would be regarded as experiential learning. The influence of Friedrich Froebel's writings was palpable in the emphasis on games and the use of *gifts* or manipulatives.²⁹

During this extraordinarily productive period Hostos also taught Constitutional Law and Political Economy at the *Instituto Profesional*, the only university in the Dominican Republic at the time. He also published two important books: *Lecciones de derecho constitucional* (1884), a treatise on constitutional law, and *Moral social* (1888), a treatise on social mores. As importantly, he wrote profusely and debated social and economic issues in the press, helping to frame a discourse for modernity that was based on material progress, integrity, democracy, and intellectual advancement of the people.³⁰ An aura of commitment, honesty, and respect nurtured the legend that Alvarez recovers in her novel. He would be el Maestro for future generations. The following year, 1889, he and his family were forced to leave the Dominican Republic, due to his criticism of dictator Ulysses Hereaux. Consequently, Hostos accepted an invitation by Chilean President José M. Balmaceda to work on the educational reform underway in Chile.

A COMPLICATED CHILEAN EXPERIENCE

Hostos emerged from this third engagement in Santo Domingo as a major voice for educational reform in Latin America. His work during the following nine years in Chile was significant in terms of his

29 → Objects that children can handle and manipulate to help them visualize abstract concepts or principles. Froebel introduced this technique to early childhood education and called them "gifts." See his *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, trans. J. Jarvis (New York: D. Appleton, 1900).

30 → See Rodríguez Demorizi, *Hostos en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 2004), which collects his work written in that country.

pedagogical explorations. In 1889 he was appointed director of the Liceo de Chillán, in Southern Chile, and in 1890 he won the competition to become the director of the Liceo Amunátegui, a new high school that would become a model for the educational reform already in process.

In Santiago, Hostos maintained a very public presence, co-founding and directing various organizations, including the Santiago Atheneum (1890), the Scientific Society of Chile (1891), Chile's Scientific Congress (1894), and the Center of Chilean Professors (1895). He also published articles and books and taught International Law at the University of Chile. But his activities on behalf of the Cuban war of independence—he collected and sent money for arms and men to join the fighting, and wrote 67 public letters supporting Cuba—would provoke a reprisal from the conservative government.

Besides being director at the Liceo Amunátegui, Hostos also taught and wrote his own texts for history, geography, and Spanish. Early on, in 1889, he collaborated with scholars Víctor Letelier and Julio Bañados Espinosa in drafting a plan for the reform of the law curriculum that included sociology and economics.³¹

In response to a contest that the Ministry of Education sponsored to promote curricular development for the educational reform, Hostos earned a prize for his integrated study of geography and history for high schoolers. It appeared as *Programa de geografía e historia*.³² His work was moving in the direction of what we have come to know as interdisciplinary integration, as an alternative to the fragmentation of knowledge into isolated disciplines.

Hostos then prepared a series of short books to teach geography, in which he put into practice a gradualist, “evolutional or concentric method,” partially derived from the *landeskunde*, or regional geography, that originated in Germany. A number of German educators had been invited to Chile as part of the educational reform. This granted Hostos direct contact with Pablo Stange, who

31 → Hostos, “Reforma del plan de estudios en la Facultad de Leyes,” in *Obras completas*, tome XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 171-202.

32 → Hostos, “Programa de Geografía e Historia,” in *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol.1, 470-486. See also Sonia Ruiz Pérez, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (2013), 81-101.

was on the teaching staff at the Liceo Amunátegui and who appeared to have influenced his work.³³

Through this “evolutional” method that built on the learners’ experiences, Hostos organized the instruction of geography in concentric circles. They started at home, with the study of places that are most familiar to the child, and moved progressively to neighborhood locations and institutions, then to the district, the province, the country, and the region. Map-reading, demographics, environment, ethnography, economics, history, architecture, political and social aspects, were integrated to foster an understanding of adaptation and cultural diversity.³⁴

However, during this time relations between Hostos and the government had been deteriorating. In his “Memoria” that reported on the Liceo’s functioning during 1896, Hostos had expressed concerns about the excessive number of students, which surpassed 50, 60, and even 80 in one of the classes. “In such circumstances,” he wrote, “teaching was anti-pedagogic and ineffectual.”³⁵ He asked for additional sections, with no results. In the “Memoir” of 1897, he proposed that the institution offer a two-track program on the basis of the functions it performed: as a high school leading to practical employment, and a prep school leading to university studies.³⁶ Apparently this generated no response from the authorities either.

During the fall of 1897, due to discrepancies in the certification of the proficiency exams of a student, Hostos’s performance was called into question. The educational authorities requested the intervention of the Rector of the University to review the case, who in turn

33 → Carlos Pérez Morales, *La geografía. Eugenio María de Hostos, maestro de geografía* (sic), (San Juan: Editorial Isla Negra, 2001), 60.

34 → Hostos, “Geografía evolutiva,” in *Obras completas*, tome XX (*Ensayos didácticos III*), vol. 3, 7-112. See also: “Enseñanza concéntrica,” “La religión en el plan de estudios concéntricos,” “Los frutos del plan concéntrico,” in *Obras Completas*, tome XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 287-95, and 306-314 (respectively). See also Pérez Ruiz, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2013). Pérez Morales’s book provides much information on the subject. As part of this series, Hostos also wrote one of the first books on urban geography in Latin America, which unfortunately remains unpublished due to severe difficulties in its readability, as per conversation with Dr. Pérez Morales.

35 → Ruiz Pérez, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile*, 86-87.

36 → *Ibid.*, 87.

commissioned the Dean of Humanities to investigate. Hostos was asked to explain in writing the perceived irregularities and an audit was subsequently conducted. In April he was asked to resign as the rector of the Amunátegui Institute.³⁷

There is reason to believe that the government's actions were politically-motivated. Hostos's political activism in favor of Cuba, contrary to the government's conservative policies, appears to have been a factor in bringing about the audit that led to his resignation. Aided by his friend, Senator Guillermo Matta, Hostos took the matter to the president of the republic, Federico Errázuriz Echaurren, but chose not to challenge the outcome and requested instead a travel allowance that would enable him to go with his family to Venezuela. His family would stay with his recently-widowed mother-in-law. Subsequently Hostos would travel to New York to explore employment possibilities. In a letter to his friend Julio Bañados, he expressed a desire to look for a better climate for two of his family members, who were apparently sick.³⁸ His decision to leave Chile also seems to have been motivated by his interest in being close to the Antilles, given his growing concerns at a time when war appeared imminent in the region.

PUERTO RICO: HOSTOS INVENTS AN NGO, TO NO AVAIL, AGAINST U.S. COLONIALISM

In the Spring of 1898, as a result of the United States entry into the war against Spain that Cuba and the Philippines had been waging, Hostos returned to New York. Soon after he arrived, he visited Washington on the eve of the invasion of Puerto Rico and was made aware that the U.S.

37 → Ibid. See also: Luis Riveros Cornejo, "Eugenio María de Hostos: Educador y político. Discurso del Rector de la Universidad de Chile con motivo del homenaje al educador," (Universidad de Chile, August 11, 2003), <http://www.uchile.cl/portal/presentacion/historia/luis-riveros-cornejo/discursos/5563/eugenio-maria-de-hostos-educador-y-politico>; and Carmelo Delgado Cintron, *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos. 1857-2003*, Tomo II (Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Derecoop, 2012), 580-593

38 → Cited in Pérez Ruiz, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile*, 89-90, footnote 20.

planned to annex the island. He was disillusioned and momentarily considered going into business or finding a job.³⁹ However, he refused to give up on his commitment to the rights of Puerto Ricans and decided to pick up the fight by organizing them and using legal means.

Hostos worked with the leaders of the Puerto Rican Section of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York City to create a new nonpartisan organization to defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. The League of Puerto Rican Patriots was founded in that city on September 1, 1898. Its short-term objectives were to unite Puerto Ricans and to seek a prompt transition from the military occupation to a civilian government. It also sought to promote a plebiscite, or a direct vote by the people that would serve as a mechanism for self-determination. International law was still far from accepting national rights as legitimate, but President McKinley had stated that forced annexation of a territory by the United States was tantamount to "criminal aggression."⁴⁰ So Hostos, who admired the U.S. institutions and Constitution, thought it unthinkable that it would become a colonial empire. Nevertheless, McKinley, pressed by economic, political, and military interests, embarked on a colonial policy that changed the course of the United States. The following year, on January 21, 1899, a Puerto Rican Commission, of which Hostos was a senior member, met with McKinley and proposed a series of political and socio-economic initiatives that were completely ignored.

Hostos conceptualized the League of Puerto Rican Patriots as a vehicle for self-development and decolonization, an expression of what we now call *civil society*. Today the group might be considered an NGO (non-governmental organization).⁴¹ For each of the

39 → Hostos, "Cartas a Inda del 27 de julio y 8 de agosto," in *Obras completas*, tomo III (Páginas íntimas), 292 and 304 (respectively).

40 → In his "First Annual Message" on December 7, 1897, addressing U.S. policy toward the Cuban War, McKinley stated: "I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression." See The American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29538>.

41 → Hostos, "The League of Puerto Rican Patriots," in *America: The Struggle for Freedom* (Anthology), 275-279; See also "La Liga de Patriotas Puertorriqueños," in *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña/Editorial de la UPR, 2001), vol. V (América), tomo III (Puerto Rico

island's administrative districts, there would be a municipal institute that would sponsor community and night schools, a newspaper, and weekly lectures. Hostos was keenly aware of the inhibiting effects of the four-century-old colonial legacy on the psyche of the colonized. So he conceived the League as an incubator for social and economic initiatives that would help Puerto Ricans overcome their marginalization. He wrote about turning colonial politics upside down, not to attain political power, but to transform it into *el poder social*, or "social power." This would be the enabling and legitimizing factor that would bring about change through civic participation and democracy.

During the sixteen months that Hostos spent on the island, between September of 1898 and January of 1900, he gave two series of public talks to promote the program of the League of Patriots and to explain the organization and constitutional principles of the U.S. government. He also founded two elementary schools: one in the agricultural town of Juana Díaz, in the South, and a second one in Mayagüez, the third largest city and his hometown, on the Western coast.⁴² The curriculum of the Mayagüez school used the "evolutional method," based on science, and included ethics and active learning as a means for decolonization.⁴³

Unfortunately, the schools lasted only several months. In Juana Díaz, the city council accepted Hostos's proposal, but rather than starting a new school, it conflated his school with an existing one. Its director, Oscar Muñoz, challenged the arrangement, and the military authorities sided with him. In Mayagüez, there was controversy over administering the required admission exam and also over the number of students that the school would serve. Moreover, the Inspector of Schools, John Mellows, protested to Mayor García Saint Laurent that the Council was unnecessarily spending money on independent schools—referring to Hostos's. Although strongly in his favor, the city council's vote on the budget assigned to the school was less than

"Madre Isla"), 1era parte, 23-61.

42 → See Carmelo Delgado Cintrón, *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos*, tomo III, 540-546.

43 → Hostos, "El Instituto Municipal de Mayagüez," in *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, vol. V (*América*), tome III (*Puerto Rico "Madre Isla"*), 1era parte, 57-61.

unanimous and that led to Hostos's resignation.⁴⁴ At that very same time, the military regime established a centralized educational system that excluded any independent initiatives, and did not seem interested or informed about what Maestro Hostos could offer Puerto Rico as an educator. Soon afterwards, he returned to Santo Domingo. Dictator Hereaux had been killed and a new government had been installed that was eager to bring him back so that he could continue his educational work.

Hostos's setbacks were not limited to the schools he founded. Despite his full commitment, his organizational efforts for the League of Patriots faltered. In the end, only a handful of Puerto Ricans joined his noble efforts, as he seriously misjudged the situation. Several factors were at play. The aura about the United States as a progressive and democratic nation carried much influence in Puerto Rico and created high expectations among its people that they would be treated fairly. The two reconstituted political parties, el Partido Federal and el Partido Republicano—extensions of the old parties under the Spanish colonial regime and fiercely opposed to each other—were incapable of overcoming political tribalism. They probably had little interest in aligning themselves with an outsider, who had no organizational base or power. They chose instead to pursue their own separate course of action, rather than join forces to create a common front, as Hostos had proposed. Repression also played a role. A number of journalists were jailed for writing articles protesting the abuses by the military. Hostos decried their jailing and initiated efforts to release several of them.⁴⁵ His was also one of the few voices opposed to a property-ownership requirement that would have restricted the right to vote,

44 → See Ángel R. Villarini Jusino, "Hostos in Mayagüez: educación cívica y reforma educativa," and "En Rojo," in *Claridad*, 31 de enero al 6 de febrero del 2003, 24-25; See also by Villarini Jusino, "Hostos en Mayagüez: su gestión educativa," in *Ceiba*, año 2, no.2, 2nda época, agosto-mayo 2002-2003, 5-15.

45 → Hostos brought up the case of Dr. Manuel Guzmán Rodríguez in the meeting of the Puerto Rican Commission with President McKinley. He also wrote and circulated a petition to obtain the release of Evaristo Izcoa Díaz. See Hostos, "Contra la sentencia," *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, vol. V (*América*), tomo III (*Puerto Rico "Madre Isla"*), 1era parte, 275-282. See also Delgado Cintrón, "Hostos defiende a Evaristo Izcoa Díaz," in *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos*, tome III, 574-587.

negatively impacting the working class. By early 1900, frustrated and disappointed with the U.S. military occupation, and dispirited by the lack of support, he and his family left for the Dominican Republic.

SANTO DOMINGO: THE EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVE AND ITS PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

During his last sojourn in Santo Domingo, Hostos became Inspector General of Education and resumed the directorship of the Normal School. He traveled widely throughout the country and devoted much attention to the creation of schools outside of the capital. He also showed renewed interest in civic, nongovernmental organizations, like the *Liga de Ciudadanos* (League of Citizens), as his work was increasingly directed towards popular education. In his proposed General Law of Public Education, which failed to be enacted, he assigned funding to two night schools sponsored by women's organizations: *Amantes del Progreso* (Friends of Progress) in La Vega, and *Club de Damas* (Ladies' Club) in Puerto Plata. That kind of initiative marked a difference with respect to government centralization and set a precedent for a more independently-oriented community activism.

The *Normalismo* movement was rekindled in various cities throughout the country. Evening schools for workers and kindergartens were initiated, inspired by a new educational interest based on volunteerism and local support, as reported in the press.⁴⁶ Castro Ventura laments the fact that Hostos's "role as an orienting influence on the working class has been overlooked" and that "[h]is multiple improvised lectures to orient and organize the working class unfortunately were not recorded for posterity."⁴⁷ In fact, in 1888, he founded a night school for workers, about which we have little information.

The *Proyecto de Ley de Enseñanza General*, or Bill for a General Law of Public Education, was written by Hostos and submitted to the Dominican Congress by his supporters in 1901. It was a comprehensive

46 → Santiago Castro Ventura, *Hostos en el perímetro dominicano* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Manatí, 2003), 154-160.

47 → *Ibid.*, 155.

plan that would have reformed the previous law enacted during the dictatorship and would have established free, universal public education, creating kindergartens, as well as agricultural, technical, and professional schools. As a sign of the changing times, the new schools would be coeducational, as Mary Wollstonecraft had championed in England more than a century earlier.

However, the conservative sectors, spearheaded by Archbishop Arturo Meriño and the Catholic Church, managed to prevent a vote on the bill; thus it was shelved. The loser was the Dominican people, whose highly stratified society exhibited a high rate of illiteracy.⁴⁸ To this very day, education remains a critical issue in the Dominican Republic. In light of its more recent economic advances, it would be fitting for the country where Hostos's memory is most venerated, and where he has been conferred hero status—as we have been rightfully reminded by Julia Alvarez—for it to finally come to terms with his vision of equality and educational access for all, regardless of origin, class, or gender.

ON THE HOSTOS-FREIRE CONNECTION

The connection between Hostos's pedagogical efforts and Paulo Freire's more recent and highly significant work⁴⁹ exists as a continuing commitment to popular education and democracy. Freire rejects the hierarchy established by formal education between the teacher and the pupil, focusing on the process through a critical reflection that leads to an awareness of oppression in order to overcome it. By shedding the assigned roles, a different dynamic is introduced,

48 → Ibid., 168, footnote, 5. There are no precise literacy figures, but Castro Ventura estimates it at 95%, citing a 1902 memoir by the Justice and Education Minister, published in *Gaceta Oficial*, the government's newspaper, of April 19, 1902. It indicates a ratio of one for every 50 Dominicans attending school, as well as other figures on the number of schools, pupils and professors.

49 → Among other contributions see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970); *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); *Education, the Practice of Freedom* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976); and *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. (Lanham: Rowman & Little, 1998).

whereby the teacher is transformed into a learner and the learner, into a teacher. From the “banking model,” whereby knowledge is deposited or transferred from one “knowledgeable subject” to an “ignorant receiver,” the interaction is modified as it now implies two protagonists that transform themselves and transform each other in the process of teaching and learning. The transformation requires the active and reflective appropriation of knowledge through critical and dialectical thinking.

In his speech “La escuela normal,” Hostos used an epigraph that disrupts the same hierarchy in terms that are similar to the Freirean dialectics:

[...] *el alumno aprende a enseñar;*
*el maestro aprende enseñando.*⁵⁰

To illustrate that shift in perception and empathy, Hostos quoted English educator Joseph Lancaster, “To transmit knowledge it is necessary to put yourself in the position of the person who is going to receive it.”⁵¹

Both Hostos and Freire spoke to the awareness that social change is predicated on reaching a state of consciousness, and that critical thinking is one of education’s fundamental values. Both taught how to read reflectively, from the mechanics to the larger cultural implications of literacy. Hostos wrote: “Reading, **from the very first moment**, should be critical. He who reads without reasoning, has not read.”⁵² He acknowledged the correlation between the two skills: “You teach to read **by writing**, and to write, **by tracing lines.**”⁵³

Hostos and Freire’s common legacy is about critiquing oppression and engaging with the oppressed in social and political transformation. Their critique is relevant to our predicament: Only when learning is humanized can it become a liberating force and an equalizing factor.

50 → Hostos, “Procedimientos para la enseñanza de la lectura,” *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 378.

51 → *Ibid.*, 381-382.

52 → Hostos, “Los frutos de la normal,” *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir Americano I*), vol. 1, 375. Hostos’s emphasis.

53 → *Ibid.*, 378. Hostos’s emphasis.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON HOSTOS'S RELEVANCE

More than a decade ago, in 2001, a debate took place in Puerto Rico about Hostos's pedagogical ideas. It was provoked by the widely-held expectation among educators and interested citizens that Hostos's "educational philosophy" should be made more visible and play a guiding role in the island's educational system. Many intellectuals felt that his work had been excluded from the classroom largely for political reasons, particularly because of his pro-independence views. The organizers of the forum, Dr. Rafael Aragunde, at the time Rector of the University of Puerto Rico in Cayey, and Dr. Vivian Quiles-Calderín, then director of the Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos, at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico, promoted a debate that could shed thinking on this issue and divided it into two colloquia.⁵⁴ Important Hostos scholars from the island were invited to participate. The proceedings generated fertile discussions and were subsequently published.⁵⁵ The two events invigorated the practice of intellectual debate, so dear to Hostos.

Hostos's pedagogy was more synthetic than original, as was pointed out by some of the presenters in the colloquia. It was based on rationalistic empiricism and science, and oriented towards ethical values, which Hostos believed were also governed by the laws of nature. The ultimate goal, he proposed, was to help shape "complete human beings," through a holistic, multi-faceted process that integrated intellectual, physical, emotional, esthetic, and moral aspects. Reasoning

54 → The first colloquium was held at the University Puerto Rico in Cayey, on August 8, 2001, and titled: *La reflexión pedagógica de Hostos. ¿una agenda educativa para el Puerto Rico actual? (Hostos's Pedagogical Thinking: An Educational Agenda for Today's Puerto Rico?)*. The second colloquium was held at the Universidad Carlos Albizu, in San Juan, on October 5, 2001, and was titled: *¿Se puede seguir a Hostos mediante la construcción de una nueva síntesis en el contexto de la tradición liberacionista latinoamericana? (Can We Consider Hostos Through the Construction of a New Synthesis in the Context of Latin American's Emancipatory Tradition?)*

55 → Rafael Aragunde and Vivian Quiles-Calderín, eds., *Eugenio María de Hostos. Un debate actual en torno a sus ideas pedagógicas* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos; Oficina de la Rectora, Universidad de Puerto Rico/Universidad de Puerto Rico en Cayey; Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, 2002).

and consciousness were central to that process.⁵⁶ His pedagogical and ethical views represent some of the most progressive thinking in nineteenth century Latin America, and they cause us to re-think education today in profound ways. Let us suppose that we took a number of themes and ideas that are crucial to our societies nowadays, and we looked at what Hostos had to say about them. This would be informative.

No educator in Latin America's intellectual tradition has articulated a sense of inclusiveness more encompassing than Hostos. He was an early supporter of human rights. His pronouncements on gender equality offer a strong and revealing affirmative perspective on this subject. Although Hostos did not write specifically on educational issues concerning people of African descent or indigenous peoples, he wrote compellingly about their rights and about the shared identity of human beings:

[W]hatever their color, whatever their nationality, human beings are the same rational beings everywhere. Therefore everywhere they are owed the consideration that comes with the morality, dignity, and activity of their nature.⁵⁷

Students and teachers will also find thought-provoking his short autobiographical text "El miedo a los patagones" (Fear of the Patagonians), which focuses on the plight and intelligence of Native Americans in the Patagonian region.⁵⁸ The dignified treatment of all people is today one of our fundamental values.

Should the discussion turn to the ethical questions that surround the ecological preservation of our planet, Hostos, a naturalist,⁵⁹

56 → See Caridad Oyola de Calderón, "La educación integral según Hostos," in *Hostos: Sentido y proyección de su obra en América*, ed. Julio Cesar López (Río Piedras: Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos; Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995) 285-305. See also: Ángel R. Villarini, "La enseñanza orientada al desarrollo del pensamiento según Eugenio María de Hostos," in *Hostos: Sentido y proyección de su obra en América*, 307-326.

57 → Hostos, "Platform for the *Independientes*," in *América: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 249-274.

58 → Hostos, *Obras completas*, tomo VI (*Mi viaje al Sur*), 214-217.

59 → See Carlos Rojas Osorio, *Hostos. Apreciación filosófica* (Humacao: Colegio Universitario de Humacao e Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1988).

broached the subject in several writings that deserve to be incorporated into today's curriculum. He emphasized the interconnectedness of all forms of life:

[I] sense a latent relationship that alternatively moves my feelings, provokes my reasoning, forces my will, disturbs my conscience.[...] It is in all my soul and successively it is a solicitation of my activity toward everything that surrounds it, an attraction of my feelings toward nature and life, a rational belief in the unity of all that exists, including me, an awareness that my life should be used to enhance, not to alter, the universal order that I have come to know.⁶⁰

With regards to pedagogy, his use of the concentric method for the course he designed with an integrated, gradualist, interdisciplinary approach, deserves empirical testing and exploration. Such a course on geography would be rich in its possibilities. It stands as a magnificent example of curricular integration and student-centered instruction, two contemporary concepts that he explored well ahead of his time. Similarly significant, the idea of development is at the core of Hostos's thinking about education: "Education is voluntary and critical development."⁶¹ It "should start and end with the physical, moral, and intellectual development of human beings."⁶²

These issues and ideas are surprisingly current. Relevancy in Latin America should not only be measured by carbon-dating or by the latest scholarly trends. It should also be measured by the way a given production can amplify our understanding and help us make connections between our experience, knowledge, humanity, and the universe in which we still find ourselves. To his credit, Hostos's work—imbued with an ethical and scientific bent—promotes such an understanding.

In Hostosian thinking, civilization and progress, two terms that he used as banners—and that have become suspect—were inclusive and egalitarian concepts. In that sense, Hostos's ideas challenge the tenets of the Neoliberal ideology, anchored, as they are, in dignity and

60 → Hostos, "La educación científica e la mujer," in *Hostos y la mujer*, 205-208. My emphasis.

61 → Hostos, "Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco," in *Hostos y la Mujer*, 185.

62 → *Ibid.*, 187.

equality, through shared intellectual, spiritual, and material pursuits. However, as a result of neoliberal policies and practices, education in Latin America has seen its potential and impact sharply reduced. Its neglect has curtailed its efficacy as a means to transform socio-economic structures, to enfranchise marginalized sectors, and to address various types of inequities. Yet the idea that progressive education can make a difference is far from dead. Despite its recent calamities, education can become a meaningful and powerful instrument for self-fulfillment, solidarity, and ethical action, as Hostos suggested.

When the educational and social issues that are paramount to our lives become part of the past, we will look at Hostos with our kindest regard and gratitude. Although his work is little-read and insufficiently-translated, it is full of opportunities for those who are seeking reform. Let it be known, disseminated, and put to good use. ■