

12 The Reception of Condillac in Argentina

From the Nineteenth-Century Professors of *idéologie* to José Ingenieros

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1 Introduction

In the 1910s, the Italo-Argentinian polymath José Ingenieros wrote one of the first accounts of the history of Argentinian philosophy.¹ Describing the general situation of philosophy within the context of emancipation of the South American Spanish colonies during the first half of the nineteenth century, Ingenieros stated:

From the beginning, the French influence in Spain and in America took two different directions. The one—more or less compatible with traditional doctrines—corresponded to the philosophy of the seventeenth century, in which Descartes was the predominant figure; the other—clearly antagonistic [to the first]—corresponded to the philosophy of the eighteenth century and was represented by the Encyclopedists and Condillac, finishing at the end of the century in the ideological school of Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy. The conservative spirits—forced to renew their philosophy—were inclined towards the Cartesians; the liberal spirits—adjusted to the thriving rhythm of the Revolution—were oriented towards the Encyclopedists.

(Ingenieros 1918a, 84)²

In this account, Condillac is portrayed as the main representative of the “philosophical liberalism” that influenced the renewal of the philosophical teaching during the first half of the nineteenth century. Such a narrative, which is strongly biased by Ingenieros’s sympathy for positivism, has however some failures and deserves a reappraisal. First, we will explore the reception of Condillac in the teaching of philosophy in Buenos Aires between 1819 and 1842. During these years, known in the scholarly literature as the period of the *idéologues*, Juan Crisóstomo Lafinur, Juan Manuel Fernández de Agüero, Luis José de la Peña, and Diego Alcorta were highly inspired by French philosophical trends. The presence of Condillac