

# APA Newsletters

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## NEWSLETTER ON HISPANIC/LATINO ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY

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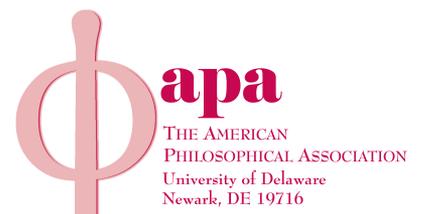
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APA NEWSLETTER ON

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Eduardo Mendieta, Editor

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### Eduardo Mendieta

In this issue of the newsletter we have been able to include a version of the introduction to the recently published book *Foucault and Latin America*, edited by Benigno Trigo. This wonderful collection gathers canonical texts from Latin American literary criticism and more recent contributions that exhibit a creative appropriation of Foucault for the study of Latin America. In turn, these contributions also illustrate how young philosophers may begin their own path of creative readings of classical figures in the Western philosophical canon by translocating them, by testing them, by immersing them in other contexts than those of either Europe or the United States. The next text by Edward Demonchonok introduces the reader to some recent work in Latin American philosophy. Demonchonok has been a long time student of Latin American philosophy and he is particularly well qualified to register the emergence of new trends and directions. In this case, Demonchonok foregrounds the ways in which Enrique Dussel's work on ethics has been a critique of ideological theories of globalization. Demonchonok then relates Dussel's critique of globalization to Raúl Fernet-Betancourt's work on "interculturality." Fernet-Betancourt is a Cuban philosopher who has been living in Germany for over twenty years now, but he has remained an active participant in the philosophical debates in Latin America. Fernet-Betancourt originally envisioned and organized the encounters between Apel and Dussel, and eventually went on to edit several volumes of these North-South encounters. More recently Fernet-Betancourt has turned his philosophical telescope to what he calls "inter-cultural philosophy." For him this is not a new sub-discipline, or corollary within the edifice of philosophy; rather, in an age of globalization, "inter-cultural" philosophy constitutes a paradigm shift on the same level as the linguistic turn.

The second part of the newsletter reproduces two interviews conducted by Linda Martín Alcoff. The first one is with Juan Flores, one of the most well known Puerto Rican intellectuals of the last two decades. Many will be surprised by the biographical details revealed in this interview, as well as the cosmopolitan and interdisciplinary character of Flores' methodology. The second interview with Lewis Gordon is also pleasantly biographical and philosophically informative. Gordon is certainly one of the most productive, innovative and well-known philosophers of the last decade in the United

States. He is known for his work on Frantz Fanon, race theory, phenomenology and Africana philosophy. His work is particularly significant because he has been bridging the divide between Latino Studies, Latin American philosophy, and Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American thought. These two "Afro-Latino" philosophers epitomize the cosmopolitanism and originality of an emergent paradigm in cultural studies and philosophy.

The committee welcomes as a new chair Susana Nuccetelli who has been appointed by the APA directors to take over Pablo DeGreiff, who resigned late last semester from the chairship. We are thankful to Prof. Nuccetelli for taking over this important job. We also congratulate her for the recent publication of *Latin American Thought: Philosophical Problems and Arguments* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001). A panel on this book has been organized for the Central Division meeting of the APA, scheduled to meet in Chicago at the end of April.

### The Present Members of the Committee are:

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## ARTICLES

### **Latinamerican Genealogies: Appropriating Foucault**

**Benigno Trigo**

*SUNY at Stony Brook*

Since the mid-eighties, Michel Foucault's work has informed much of the critical thought about Latin America's cultural, literary, historical, and political events. Influential works written in the United States such as *The Lettered City* (1984) by Angel Rama, *Myth and Archive* (1990), by Roberto González Echevarría, *Foundational Fictions* (1991) by Doris Sommer, and *At Face Value* (1991) by Sylvia Molloy, draw from Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), *The History of Sexuality* (1976) and *Technologies of the Self* (1988) to develop concepts like the consciousness of an intellectual elite (or *letrados*), the archive novel, the foundational fiction, and self-writing all of which are now the common currency of critical analysis in and about Latin America. Thus, it is not surprising that a new generation of critics in universities in the United States continues this trend and turns to Foucault in an effort to develop its own insights into Latin American culture, politics, history, and literature.

However, as the division of this volume into Discourse, Government, Subjectivity and Sexuality suggests, the trend to appropriate Foucauldian topics, strategies, and modes of analysis has been selective rather than wholesale. Indeed, as is made clear in the essays by Elzbieta Sklodowska, Doris Sommer, Román de la Campa, and Kelly Oliver, the impulse towards a selective appropriation of Foucault's work turns into a critical appropriation in some cases.

What explains this selective and sometimes critical appropriation of Michel Foucault's work; and why has Michel Foucault been so popular among these writers? One may begin to answer these two questions by engaging *Latin Americanism*, a recent and fascinating book by Román de la Campa (one of whose chapters is included in this volume). In that book, de la Campa maps "a transnational discursive community" which he calls "Latin Americanism."<sup>1</sup> It is a powerful and indeed convincing mapping of the last thirty years of critical production about Latin America written both from within and from outside of that geographical space. In that book, de la Campa identifies two key moments or states of this discursive community. He refers to the first as an "epistemic negation" and to the second as an "episthetic." These two moments or states roughly correspond to a general moment in the history of literary studies: the appearance of "modes of deconstruction of [structuralist] constructs, some strictly from the singularity of key or canonical texts, others with a more extensive model of how textuality and dispersal challenge history as well as literary studies." (128) In other words, the negative epistemic and the episthetic moment are simultaneous but different events that correspond to the deconstructive challenge to structuralism, or to what is otherwise known as post-structuralism. According to de la Campa, the difference between these two modes of the same

deconstructive moment is crucial. The negative epistemic tries to engage the "life-world" by calling into question its own linguistic and rhetorical modes of operation and by problematizing its object of analysis. The episthetic only "mimics" the first, but in fact remains content with its unexamined method and object of analysis. Indeed, it even goes so far as to "celebrate" what, for de la Campa, amounts to an aesthetic reduction of the material and spiritual needs of that "life-world." (19) In short, for de la Campa these two states or moments of Latin Americanism correspond to its postcolonial and to its postmodern respective directions after the post-structuralist turn.

In his book, de la Campa further argues that while the postmodern episthetic has been the dominant moment in Latin Americanism, it is also in a state of exhaustion. He suggests that the way out of the postmodern dead-end is not so much to fully embrace the new rhetoric of globalization and its push for cultural studies, but to re-visit the postcolonial moment or state and draw useful lessons from it. For de la Campa, one of the last works by the critic Angel Rama (*The Lettered City*) contains the useful lessons taught by the negative epistemic within the postcolonial moment of Latin Americanism. Significantly, de la Campa traces Rama's negative epistemic back to Michel Foucault's "discursive epistemology." In turn, Foucault develops this epistemology (according to de la Campa) during his "archaeological moment."

One ventures to say that *The Lettered City* is a true essay — in the double sense of providing a test as well as a rehearsal — of many theoretical aspects that have fueled debates in the years since it was published, many of which are central to Foucault's own work. It is now well understood that *The History of Sexuality*, or *Technologies of the Self*, for example, constitute profound revisions of the discursive epistemology that was central to *The Order of Things* or *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. (125)

Thus, parallel to his description of the post-structuralist turn in Latin Americanism, de la Campa describes Foucault's work as a divided corpus. While the Foucault of *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is akin to the postcolonial direction of Latin Americanism, the Foucault of *The History of Sexuality* or *Technologies of the Self* is akin to the postmodern moment. Following the first Foucault, Rama focuses on discourse in such a way as to simultaneously suggest discourse's potential for empowerment and its constitution of prison house. (124) "This focus (continues de la Campa) includes a way of theorizing the arbitrariness of the sign, the so-called abyss between language and world, never quite accepting [it] unconditionally, nor failing to see it as an opportunity to continue to theorize colonialism, imperialism, and agency." (128) By contrast, the second Foucault emphasizes what de la Campa calls "the micropolitics of subjection." (116) Rather than permitting the theorization of colonialism, imperialism and agency, this Foucault instead leads to a version of the West as self-contained which de la Campa thinks Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is right to criticize in her 1988 essay "Can the Subaltern Speak".

Despite de la Campa's elegant and sincere attempt to inhabit the middle ground of what he describes as "Latin

American entanglements”, this description of Foucault’s divided corpus clearly falls on the side of the theorization of agency available only through the first Foucault; which emphasis essentially divides Foucault’s work into an empowering side, leading to action, and the other side, leading to the *cul-de-sac* of celebratory aestheticism and self-perpetuating literariness. Thus, de la Campa confronts us with two Foucaults rather than one aporetic Foucault: the Foucault of deeds and the Foucault of words, the Foucault of postcolonialism and the Foucault of postmodernism. To be fair, such a characterization runs against the grain of de la Campa’s stated purpose, who does not want to turn literary deconstruction (and postmodernity) into a *bête noire*. (viii) And yet, one cannot help but conclude that there is in *Latin Americanism* a strong preference to turn away from that direction and embrace instead the postcolonial challenge, which is “defining a struggle against an imperial tradition that encumbers the critic’s own contradictory attempts to simultaneously invest and resist it, to ‘leave the wound open,’ as Spivak is wont to say.” (19)

Following de la Campa’s logic, one can attempt an initial stab at the two questions asked at the beginning of this essay. Indeed, both Foucault’s popularity and his critical appropriation by Latin Americanism could be explained by the very same fact. Foucault’s divided corpus, the wounded but active body of his “archaeological moment,” and the self-absorbed aestheticism of his later work, would explain his attraction to followers of both currents of post-structuralism. By the same token, Foucault’s divided work would also explain the criticism that sometimes accompanies the appropriation of his work. And yet, as is made evident in this volume, and as de la Campa himself suggests, Foucault has not been appropriated in so straightforward a manner. Moreover, as will be suggested in this introduction (and as I argue in my contribution to this volume) to divide the work of Foucault into such clearly distinct parts is to miss the all-important interconnection between opposites such as word and deed, language and matter, resistance and discipline, that is Foucault’s definition of discourse.

Roberto González Echevarría’s appropriation of Foucault is a case in point. The first chapter of his book *Myth and Archive* (included in this essay) uses the Foucault of the “archaeological moment” despite the fact that, according to de la Campa, González Echevarría’s works are on the postmodern side of the post-structuralist divide. De la Campa explains this odd alliance as a corrective attempt to incorporate Foucauldian categories into methods of deconstructionist close readings that have otherwise failed. (131) This explanation, however, presupposes the unlikely admission, or at least the suspicion, by González Echevarría that his method has failed, when perhaps one should first consider revising the binary model that makes a failure of deconstruction and a success of “discursive epistemology.” Conversely, in a chapter of her book *At Face Value* (also included in this volume), Sylvia Molloy uses the later Foucault of *Technologies of the Self*. But according to de la Campa, Molloy (together with other women writers and critics) occupies a crucially destabilizing terrain for both moments of Latin Americanism; an effect that doesn’t quite match Molloy’s reliance on the later “postmodern” Foucault. De la Campa significantly describes this terrain as “the blindspot shared by transculturation and postmodern Latin

Americanism.” (27) But the slippage between Molloy’s destabilization of postmodern Latin Americanism and her reliance on Foucault’s essay on “Self-writing,” suggests that perhaps the blindspot identified by de la Campa is bigger than he imagines it to be.

Román de la Campa brilliantly suggests that there is a third space that points to an overlooked but valuable critical terrain that cannot be reduced to either postcolonialism or postmodernism. But this third space also includes a terrain that lies outside of the agonistic model that informs aspects of de la Campa’s engagement with Foucault’s corpus in particular and Latin Americanism in general. Moreover, the search for this third space can be found not only in the work of de la Campa, but also in the work of the other contributors to this volume and, more to the point, in the work of Michel Foucault. His notion of “discourse” goes a long way in the direction of that third space, which I have argued elsewhere puts into question the very difference between matter and metaphor, fact and fiction, truth and error (*Subjects of Crisis* 4). Indeed discourse is a material operation at odds with its materiality, and a figurative representation uncomfortable and even dismissive of its own figures. Discourse aims to be seen without being material. It wants to represent or signify without figures and without the mediation of signs. Discourse is not a matter of fact, but it aspires to be known and to be seen as a matter of fact. Most importantly, it is discourse’s ambivalence or refusal to place subjects in symmetrical or dialectical relations of power and recognition that explains its attraction and the otherwise paradoxical appropriations of Foucault by critics like González Echevarría and Sylvia Molloy.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is the common search for the uncertain ground of discourse and the vicissitudes of that search that explain the attraction of Foucault’s theory and his critical appropriation by the critics included in this volume.

De la Campa’s *Latin Americanism* is a representative example of the relentless search for the space of discourse in this strong sense. But a close look at the two principles driving his genealogy of Latin Americanism also reveals the vicissitudes often encountered in the hopeful search for that liminal space. On the one hand, De la Campa’s primary distinction between a postcolonial and a postmodern direction after the post-structuralist turn (or between a negative epistemic and an episthetic moment) is based on the existence of what he refers to as the “life-world.” On the other hand, De la Campa’s choice to turn away from the postmodern direction and its episthetic moment and to invoke the state of the negative epistemic is predicated on the need to remain engaged with the “material and spiritual needs” of that “life-world.” Paradoxically, this engagement presupposes the wounding of the subject of theory or criticism. Indeed, to take the “responsible” role of that subject is also to inhabit the wound that for de la Campa is either coextensive with the “life-world,” or is its necessary condition.

Despite frequent allusions to the “life-world” de la Campa never defines in detail what he means by the term. Sometimes he refers negatively to “life-world” as a form of culture that is not strictly literary (4). At other times he describes it more positively as “lived postmodernity,” (4) or as the “living aspect of postmodern logic;”(7) thus, making of the act of “living” and a form of “culture” the two main attributes of the “life-world.” This sketchy definition resonates

with aspects of the phenomenological concept of *Lebenswelt* (literally translated as “life-world”) as defined by Edmund Husserl. In the lectures given in 1935, Husserl made a fundamental redefinition of phenomenology. He no longer took the transcendental ego to exist “absolutely.” Instead, he took it to be correlative to *Lebenswelt*, the lived world, the world in which we live, the world as it is for an intersubjective community of individuals, as opposed to the world as known to science, or to any transcendental individual (Schmitt 98). Rather than an empirical science, phenomenology was to be a reflective way to study the “life-world,” to contemplate not matters of fact but “the necessary conditions for coherence and adequacy of experience.”

From such a phenomenological perspective, de la Campa distinguishes between a Latin American and a Western “life-world,” living culture or lived experience. He argues that “a concern with social, cultural, and ethnic hybridity speaks to internal changes within the Western “life-world;” (19) and he warns against constructing a Latin America strictly from such a perspective or from United States universities. More importantly, however, de la Campa does not understand these different “life-worlds” to be irreconcilable. Instead, with phenomenological emphasis on “life” and “intersubjectivity” he argues for the construction of Latin America from a “bridge” that “draws closer to the Latin American cultural life-world.” (15) This “bridge” could either be “Latin Americanism” (the transnational discursive community), or more to the point it could be intersubjective phenomenology or the study of the “life-world” without its Western or Latin American qualifiers. If the latter, this “bridge” would take us not only closer to the “Latin American cultural life-world” but more importantly it would take us to an alternative space that de la Campa describes as both “a distant future” and an “uncharted territory:” “the possibility of a transnational dimension to the study of the Americas.” (6)

If de la Campa’s use of the metaphor of the bridge resonates with the pre-structuralist weight of Husserlian phenomenology and with phenomenology’s references to the study of “the necessary conditions for coherence and adequacy of experience,” de la Campa’s simultaneous emphasis on the contradictions and the “founding catachresis” of this same space are a direct reference to Spivak’s postcolonial mode of critique and textuality. Similarly, if de la Campa refers to the as-yet “uncharted territory” where this bridge will take us, or to a future that in some ways we are already living, he also refers to that promised land as “an absence” (16) or as “a claim for which no adequate referent exists” (10) evoking in this way the puzzling image of the “undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns” (Shakespeare).

De la Campa’s emphasis on paradoxical figures of speech (catachresis), on absence, and on inexistence, reveals a strong death drive struggling against an equally strong life-affirming intersubjective phenomenology. The death drive is belied by the melancholy spirit with which de la Campa emphasizes “concerns over the globalization of cultural forms as well as their tendency to absorb all spaces of contestation and resistance.” (7) Similarly, if he “aims to find a framework able to examine the modern with the postmodern,” he does so “with a vigilant eye to colonial residues.” (27) De la Campa’s “vigilance” about colonial loss and about the loss of spaces of resistance are also self-conscious references to

Spivak who calls on the intellectual to “leave the wound open” (18-19) in the struggle against an imperial tradition, and to “say ‘no’” to the luck “of having access to the culture of imperialism,” while still recognizing that “she must inhabit it.” (10)

Thus, the death drive of *Latin Americanism* could be traced back to a similar impulse driving Spivak’s essay, for whom “the narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme.” (Spivak 82) Indeed, for Spivak phallogocentric and imperialist violence is but a version of a more general violence that, quoting Derrida, she calls writing. This “writing” is paradoxical. On the one hand, it produces the positions of and the violent struggles between the insurgent subaltern and the Subject of thinking and knowledge. On the other hand, for Spivak it holds the curious promise of producing a violence by the self on itself.

Significantly, writing for Spivak is a lost origin and an origin of loss in the face of which the historian who does not want to freeze insurgency into an ‘object of investigation,’ must “suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her own consciousness.” (82) In the face of this loss of origin the postcolonial intellectual must “demote the Subject of thinking or knowledge as to say that ‘thought is ... the blank part of the text.’” (89) This suspension or demotion of the Subject of thinking or knowledge is equivalent to consigning thought itself (“the place of the production of theory”) to the subaltern or to “the Other of history.” But according to Spivak, even this grammatological or deconstructive demotion, suspension and consignment, even this critique of “the itinerary of the discourse of presence,” does a violence and performs erasures of which one must be ever “vigilant.” This all-important vigilance is an invocation, “an ‘appeal to’ or a ‘call’ to the ‘quite-other’” in us rather than to the Other outside of us (89). Indeed, this ‘quite-other’ is not only “in us” but it is that in us that is the very opposite of a self-consolidating other. Thus this vigilance is in the interest of a self-immolation that Spivak (quoting Derrida) describes as a delirium: “rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us.” (89)

Both Spivak and de la Campa desire such a delirious, wounded, vigilant, disciplined melancholy subjectivity for themselves as the means to gain access to the privileged state, or as the way into what I’ve been calling the “third space,” which functions as a threshold into the “life-world” (in the case of de la Campa), or the economic and/or material registers of experience (in the case of Spivak). Like the No of the ascetic priest in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, this process of self-wounding, these negations of life, as if by magic bring to light “an abundance of tender Yeses.”<sup>3</sup> (Nietzsche 121) Thus, like the actions of the ascetic priest who “[even] when he wounds himself [...] the very wound itself afterward compels him to live,” the passage through this open “wound” or threshold is both a symptom and a remedy for a self-diagnosed condition. If on the surface this condition appears to be the exhaustion of postmodernism in the case of de la Campa, and the *huis clos* of Western thinking in the case of Spivak, closer inspection of their melancholy works might reveal a shared concern over the origin as loss of their own location, or their dislocations as diasporic intellectuals.

The intensity of such acts of melancholy self-immolation makes the reader wonder what is at stake for these critics, what loss has been interiorized and then violently disposed of? One wonders whether what has been lost is the notion of language, discourse, or theory as offering, generosity, and good will. One wonders whether the melancholy gestures of these critics do not hide our complicity in the eradication of such a notion of language, discourse, and theory, as a proleptic act against the limit-events of our century that we have experienced, continue to experience, and sometimes drive us into exile. One wonders whether another attitude is possible in front of those limit events; an attitude that neither falls back on the disavowals and presumed transparency that Spivak is so right to criticize nor takes us to the degradation and self-violence that inevitably end in silence and death. But such meditation must be postponed to a later date in order to introduce similarly critical and sometimes melancholy attempts at reaching analogous spaces of hope in this collection of essays on Foucault and Latin America.

\* The following is an extract from the introduction to the volume edited by Benigno Trigo, *Foucault and Latin America: Appropriations and Deployments of Discursive Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2002). The editor is thankful to both Prof. Trigo and Routledge for permission to reprint.

#### Notes

1. Román de la Campa, *Latin Americanism*, 1. All further references to this text will be within the body of the essay.
2. For a development of this interpretation of Foucauldian discourse see Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*, 72.
3. I would like to thank Kelly Oliver for bringing my attention to this passage.

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## Globalization, Postcoloniality, and Interculturality

Edward Demonchonok  
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Latin American philosophers contribute to the debate about globalization and to the efforts to change the social sciences. They are motivated by real problems, such as the underdevelopment of their societies, and the necessity to understand their problems and to find solutions. They address these problems, and express their understanding of them from the victim's perspective, from the "underside" of globalization. They articulate the ethical perspective in their analysis of globalization, contributing to the development of "planetarian metaethics." They also contribute to the intercultural transformation of philosophy, as well as to the search for an alternative to the current globalization.

### Philosophy of Liberation and Postcoloniality

The controversies of globalization affect Latin America and they are the theme of reflection of economists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers. Latin American Philosophy of Liberation develops a critique of globalization from historical, cultural, and ethical perspectives. This theme is presented in debates about "a philosophy of the Latin American history" (Leopoldo Zea), "civilization and barbarism" (Arturo Roig), and "dependence and liberation" (Enrique Dussel, Juan Carlos Scannone, Osvaldo Ardiles, Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, Raúl Fonet-Betancourt). They show that globalization is carrying out the main assumptions of Eurocentrism and Western cultural and economic hegemony. Analyzing the economy-centered technocratic concept of globalization, they reveal its ideological function as a justification of neo-liberal policy. As Franz Hinkelammert notes, the current globalization is essentially the result of an uncontrolled expansion of political and economic neoliberalism which is aiming to homogenize the planet according to the free-market requirements. Enrique Dussel indicates that globalization is not just our century's phenomenon, but rather a historical process which started with colonization and modernity (*Underside*, 51-53).

Latin American philosophers develop their critique of globalization from two theoretical perspectives: *postcoloniality* and *interculturality*. This two approaches interrelated and complement each other. While postcolonial theories, authored by the intellectuals from the Third World countries, expand the posmodern critique of the Modernity and of Eurocentrism from the colonial difference, the ideas of interculturality, developed by the theorists from both First and Third worlds, are focused more on cultures and their possibilities to serve as the basis for creating an alternative to the homogenizing globalization.

Latin American philosophy belongs to the critical-ethical humanistic thought. From this perspective, it criticized at the first half of the 20th Century the positivist social philosophy. The Philosophy of Liberation, emerged during the 1970's, criticized the technocratic theories of developmentalism (*desarrollismo*) and more recently the technocratic neoliberal ideology of globalization. This philosophy challenged the deterministic and Eurocentric view of history and tried to sketch the project of the independent development of Latin

America based on its own historical and cultural tradition and potential. By doing so, it contributed to the development of the liberational thought in Africa and Asia. However, the Latin American philosophy was not free from many illusions of the 1970s, including the Third World anticolonial narratives based on the dichotomies “oppressor-oppressed,” “imperialism-nationalism,” and “capitalism-socialism,” which reproduced the homogenizing structures of modern knowledge and represented the “other” as a counterpart of the European self-representations.

The Philosophy of Liberation responds to the global and other challenges of our time first of all by the critical revision of existing knowledge, especially social sciences. It starts with the self-critical reflexion upon its own theoretical grounds. Since the 1990s, in a new historical situation after the end of the Cold War, the Philosophy of Liberation strives for its own renovation in order to be in a better position for understanding the new processes, including those related to globalization. The internal debate among various representatives of this philosophy (Zea, Dussel, Roig, Scannone, Cerutti, Fernet-Betancourt) as well as the external critique from different perspectives, led to the revision of the concept of philosophy, of the philosophy of history, of the notions of “the social class” and “people” (*pueblo*), of the messianic role of the philosopher, etc. This philosophy thus evolved from confrontation to dialogue with other philosophical currents, and contributed to the North-South philosophical dialogue.

During the last decade the Philosophy of Liberation has evolved in tune with the *postcolonial* thought. The collapse of the colonial system, and more recently of the Berlin Wall, was accompanied by the collapse of their ideologies. These events, including the new processes in economy, politics, and culture challenged traditional disciplinary knowledge, which was called into question by critical theory, then by postmodern philosophy and postcolonial theories. These theories critically revised the philosophical grounds of the social sciences. Postcoloniality theorizes of the crises of the social sciences and humanistic discourses rooted in modernity. This theorizing is beyond disciplinary boundaries. It challenges history as a discipline, its concepts of the state, the economy, the politics, and subjects, and unmasks its Eurocentric character which ignored the role of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The social sciences have had to become self-reflective, i.e. they must account for their own acts of theorization and narrativity. This is a self-conscious theorizing that acknowledges that its categories bear the marks of their genesis, that they were historically related to Western culture and used to justify the colonial and neocolonial projects. Postcolonial thought traces connections between the political-economical interests of the First World countries, the politics of knowledge predominant in their academia, and their image of the Third World. At the same time, the postcolonial thought is also critical of the “uncontaminated” and “salvific” image of the Other created in the ex-colonies, indicating that this is “the Other of the same.” Finally, the postcoloniality is the critique of globalization as viewed from its underside (Mendieta, “Globalization”).

Latin American Philosophy and postcolonial theories are interrelated. Latin American thought has the preeminence in developing the philosophical basis for a systematic critique of colonialism and Occidentalization. Postcolonial theories,

developed by authors from India, the Arab world, and Africa added new dimensions in the “decolonization” of history and culture. The Philosophy of Liberation as a process of its own renovation creatively assimilates the ideas of postcoloniality and at the same time contributes to their further development.

Latin American authors (both those residing in their own countries and those who immigrated to the US and Western Europe) see the postcolonial discourse as a critique of globalization from the “underside of globalization.” They creatively develop the postcolonial ideas of Said, Bhabha, and Spivak, applying them to the Latin American experience, and combining them with their own theoretical thought, which has resulted in a new synthesis. Whereas postcoloniality unmasks the connections between the imperial system of power and the images of the colonies produced by its ideological agencies, the Latin-Americanist researchers extend their critique deeper into the area of culture, showing indirect connections between the socio-economic system, power interests, and the manipulative use of mass-culture (including the colonization of language and memory). These authors see postcoloniality as a critical theory for an “age of globalization and exclusion.” They bring postcoloniality to a new theoretical level, developing its philosophical basis. Following the series of “post-” nomenclature, I would identify the critique of the technocratic global doctrine and the search for an alternative as “post-globalism.”

The in-depth critique of globalization from the Latin American postcolonial perspective is realized, for example, in the book, *Teorias sin disciplina: Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, edited by Santiago Castro-Gomez and Eduardo Mendieta (1998), in which Walter Mignolo, Ileana Rodriguez, Alberto Moreiras and other authors contributed.

The authors present globalization as an ambiguous and multidimensional process which gathers synergetic and centrifugal tendencies. They analyze the paradoxes of the globalization of the local and localization of the global (the authors use a neologism *glocalization*), of the new forms of production of wealth and also, concomitantly, of poverty (14). Indeed, globalization has dissolved the boundaries among economy, politics, and culture, challenging traditional disciplinary knowledge. All disciplines, therefore, must reconsider their own form of theorization, becoming self-reflective. Postcoloniality is the critique of cognitive strategies dictated by the colonial and imperial projects of the West, denouncing an internal entwinement between a socio-economic system and its cultural-ideological products, including social theories which are used as instruments of manipulation and control. Globalization is observed from its underside and from the perspective of its victims. The authors see postcoloniality as a critical theory for our “global age.” They emphasize that this is self-conscious theorizing, open to the critical analysis of its own categories. Following the series of “post-” nomenclature, I would identify the critique of the technocratic globe-doctrine and the search for an alternative as “post-globalism.”

Walter Mignolo shows the preeminence of Latin American thought in developing the philosophical basis for a systematic critique of colonialism and Occidentalization. He proposes a comparative and philological methodology and a pluritopic hermeneutics as an approach for the radical

rethinking of cultural differences, of the Other as a subject to be understood, and of the understanding subject itself. Instead of the notion *representation* in human sciences he prefers *enactment*. The pluritopic hermeneutics calls into question the understanding subject itself: we must look at the configuration of power, the interests, and the politics of the intellectual inquiry implied in a scholarly work or political discourse. Mignolo analyzes the “politics of knowledge” implemented in the US, which created a certain image of Latin America as an object of social sciences, understood as “area studies” (for example LASA). He indicates that with the increasing immigration of intellectuals from Latin America to the US, there emerges a new type of work with a “border epistemology” which goes beyond the occidental pattern and allows the creation of new thought from the perspective of immigrants, refugees, etc.

Eduardo Mendieta analyzes the role of liberation philosophy and theology in the formation of postcolonial thought. He traces the “original sin” of Modernity back to the birth of Christianity. The author examines the Christian concept of time and history and reveals the links between Christianity, Modernity, and Postmodernity. He states that Modernity is a secularization of the Christian chronogram, and that the revealing of God throughout history is reflected in the concept of progress, whether moral or technological. Mendieta echoes Heidegger’s analysis of the modern concept of time underlying the teleological representations of society and history. Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* was a reaction against this “temporal fetishism” and Hegel’s historicism. His concept of *Dasein* (Being here) etymologically gives a local-spatial view of human individual. Man is being in time, but he is not manipulated by it: by the very mode of his being, man himself is time and has the ontological privilege of “being history.” Mendieta’s position coincides with that of Dussel, Roig, Zea and other Latin American philosophers, who show that the postmodern concept of the “end of history” is an apology of the *status quo*. They emphasize that the Latin American nations, which are burdened with stinging social-economic problems, do not want to “close history” and that liberation remains their purpose.

Mendieta indicates that liberation theologies have articulated a new vision of our planet and the human community, being postmodern before the Europeans thought of postmodernism; at the same time they have advanced beyond postmodernism, or rather they are trans-modern. He shows the similarities between liberation theology and liberation philosophy which are both part of the postcolonial theorizing. Both consider the world from the vitalist perspective (Dussel’s concept of “community of life”). They look at history from its “underside,” revealing the complementarity and internal entwining between the wealth of the First World and the poverty of the Third World. In contrast to the panoptical chronotope of modernity, the world is not the disjunction of space and time, which relegates the different to another country, in another time, but the conjunction of both (Mendieta calls it “the double spacial-temporal axis”) (161). The underdeveloped and developed regions are two aspects of the same process of economic and socio-cultural interdependence. From a global perspective, Europe and America are the “interpretative institutions;” they are distorted mirrors in which representations of the other and themselves are reflected.

Santiago Castro-Gomez focuses on the role of knowledge and the experts in it. He considers this colonization a heritage of modernity, which continues to reproduce itself in the links between the discursiveness of the social sciences and the images of Latin America formed by the bureaucratic rationality of academies, both in North and South America. Castro-Gomez promotes the project of a genealogy or archaeology of Latin Americanism from inside the region. He applies the ideas of the second order Latin Americanism to the epistemological critique of the traditional representations or “myths” of Latin America about itself, such as: the “cosmic race,” the telluric and autochthonous cultural identity, and the epistemic privilege of the poor. Castro-Gomez traces these myths back to the modernity era and shows that, in spite of themselves, they were *western* representations, used by the populist nation-state aimed at reaching “modernization” of Latin America. He infers that “the project of rationalization has been an Archimedean point on which all the Latin Americanisms of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were constructed” (202). Castro-Gomez points out the structural paradox of Latin Americanism, which uses its homogenizing language of modern knowledge while pretending to represent the heterogeneity and differences in Latin America (what G. Spivak calls “the epistemic violence”). He considers that the liberation philosophy and theology in their “journey towards an origin,” towards the unrepresented world of subaltern, also perpetuate a metaphysical scheme: the search for first beginnings and the essential truth about “sameness.” As result of his genealogy he concludes that “underneath the historical representations of Latin America is not a more authentic representation, but rather a *will to representation* which affirms itself in a ferocious struggle with other wills” (203).

### The Intercultural Transformation of Philosophy

Among the existing efforts to transform philosophy, intercultural philosophy represents an original approach, viewing philosophy as culturally embedded. This new avenue is explored by R. Fernet-Betancourt, who developed a project of the intercultural transformation of philosophy.

He argues that the transformation of philosophy has, as its immediate task, to liberate philosophy from dogmas and obsolete schemes, in order to pave the way for renovation. An important aspect of this transformation is related to the interdisciplinary approach. Another aspect of the transformation of philosophy is related to interculturality, or the dialogue of cultures. It claims the necessity of reviewing the Eurocentric philosophical historiography and, based on the reconstruction of the history of ideas in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, of creating a new view of the history of philosophy. A philosophy, accepting intercultural dialogue as a context of its reflection, enters inevitably into the process of large scale transformation, which requires it to reconstruct its history, its methods and forms of articulation. The transformation creates conditions so that a philosophy is able to reach a universality qualitatively different than that known before, because it is arising from shared communication between the different cultural universes.

The transformation of philosophy in the context of a dialogue of cultures also “includes the traditions of critical theory and of liberation philosophy” (Fernet-Betancourt *Interculturalidad*, 83). In other words, its task is to broaden the horizon of the critique and of the liberation through the

dialogue of the different philosophical cultures of Humanity. Finally, philosophy transformed in this way can achieve free range for its development and social role. It can be used in public discourses to address social and global problems.

Fornet-Betancourt applies the principles of intercultural philosophy to his analysis of the current situation of Latin American philosophy. He states, that it is still heavily influenced by Eurocentrism and should pay more attention to the indigenous and Afro-American cultures. “For the practicing philosophy in Latin America,” he writes, “it means, concretely, the necessity to open philosophy to the indigenous and Afro-American traditions, to their symbolic universes, their imaginaries, their memories and rituals; and this is not as mere object of studies, but as a living word of subjects with whom we have to learn and to study together” (76). The ideal for this transformation of philosophy in Latin America is that it would be “a home in which all the nations and cultures of the continent could articulate freely their memories and their word of the living subjects” (76).

The emerging intercultural philosophy draws our attention to the cultural embedding of philosophical thinking. The examining of its cultural contexts has serious implications. It introduces a new perspective in our understanding of what philosophy is, of the history of philosophy and of its present role in today’s society. The transformation of philosophy, based on the intercultural dialogue, is so significant that Fornet-Betancourt considers it a new paradigm (Interview). Whether or not intercultural philosophy will become a new paradigm (in Thomas Kuhn’s sense), only the future will tell. However, the term “paradigm” is useful as a working hypothesis, helping to express certain important ideas. First of all, it denotes the revolutionary changes in the theoretical framework for understanding philosophical questions, in light of the fundamental role of cultures in the development of philosophy. Second, it places intercultural philosophy as the next step in a sequence of paradigms, which represent the dialectics of tradition and innovation in the historical development of philosophy. Intercultural philosophy is situated above the rationalism and subjectivism of Modernity, above the limitations of analytical philosophy, and as an alternative to the nihilism of postmodern philosophers. It is in tune with the existing critique of scientism and the professionalization of philosophy, and with the call for a pluralistic, community-oriented and culturally rooted style of philosophizing.

Intercultural philosophy is focused on the situation of culture and of its creator—the human being—in today’s globalized world. Cultures are viewed as evolving and interrelated, and as being a product of human creativity. Concurrently, homogenization and other problems which cultures are facing in the process of globalization are epiphenomena of the drama of the human individual in a dehumanized world. Fornet-Betancourt, Dussel and other Latin American philosophers approach globalization as a philosophical problem, focusing on the human subject. They place man and human life the center of their analyse as a criterion of judgement for the positive or negative effects of globalization. Assuming this position “from the human perspective,” one can reflect on the meaning these processes have for human beings. This opens the possibility for the researcher to make a diagnosis of the social, cultural and ecological effects of globalization on human life. They

challenge the view of an individual as a passive object of the forces of globalization, and explores man’s possibilities of influencing these processes and taking control over his future.

Fornet-Betancourt develops the concept of the subject as an alternative to postmodern “anti-humanism.” The modern concept is obsolete. However, “the rumors about Man’s death were greatly exaggerated,” and he must be rediscovered and newly understood by a new philosophy. The author also criticizes the anthropological consequences of the universalization of the neoliberal economic system, its *inhumanity*. He considers the ideas of the critical-ethical humanistic philosophical tradition as the basis for developing a bold, new concept of the subject. He aims a philosophical understanding of a real human being, in his multidimensionality, historicity, and creativity. The new concept presents not an abstract incorporeal subject, reduced to a reflectivity, but rather includes as his essential dimensions materiality and contingency. This approach is rooted in the ideas of the living subjectivity, developed by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, and in the Hispanic philosophy by Miguel de Unamuno, José Ortega y Gasset, and Xavier Zubiri. The author develops the concept of a free, conscious, and active subject, able to reason critically and to act in order to mold himself and transform society.

Fornet-Betancourt introduces the concept of “limit” which refers to the minimally necessary conditions — material, social, and spiritual — for human existence and shows “how in the actual conditions of globalization it is possible to continue the tendency of liberation based on the recovery of a memory of the living subject who never ceased to defend his rights, especially his right to live” (139). In such respect, his philosophy resonate with Dussel’s life-enhancing material ethics. The reproduction and growth of human life is the main criterion of truth (theoretical and practical), since it is the absolute condition of the possibility of human existence. (Dussel, *Ethica*, 187, 323). This criterion is internal to each culture and allows it to establish a dialogue from the universality of the value of human life.

### Interculturality as an Alternative to Globalization

The inhuman circumstances of globalization create “the necessity to liberate the vitality which is subdued by these circumstances.” Globalization is aggravating the situation of underdeveloped countries, where almost 3/4 of world population are living, “of the suffering majority of humanity and of wounded nature” (Fornet, 136). Dussel warned of the potentially catastrophic consequences of an economic system in which the majority of humanity finds itself deep in poverty. This along with ecological crisis can result in “collective suicide” of Humanity (Dussel, *Etica*, 11). Philosophers of liberation point to the main problem: the controversies of globalization, which imposes the “neoliberal economic model” in the world.

Latin American philosophy contributes to the better understanding of globalization in a broader cultural context. Fornet-Betancourt shows the important role of culture in society. For him, culture is not just an artistic heritage or an issue of the inner life of an individual, rather it plays an extremely important public role as a sphere of social creativity and organization and as a center of a life-world. This essential social function of culture is undermined by the processes of globalization. An expansion of the neoliberal economic

model results in the transformation of the world in its own image, in erasing the cultural and other differences, and in homogenizing the planet (the author calls it a “new crusade”). Humankind, with its cultures, is no longer a subject, but instead a mere object of this globalizing process: an object which suffers the uncontrolled expansion of an economical system which usurps the material base of the cultures. As result, the cultures of humankind are losing their materiality, or their own “territory” where they can proceed effectively in the modeling of society according to their own values and goals. Thus, cultures remain excluded from the areas in which they are practically forging the socio-economic, political, and ecological future of humanity.

Addressing controversies of globalization, philosophy wakes up people from a hypnotizing euphoria over technological progress, or from paralyzing fatalism. In contrast to techno-economic determinism, R. Fonet develops the concept of an open history, which is a result of the activity of social groups, movements, and other historical subjects, and contains potentially many possibilities. The neoliberal “model,” while in our time predominant, is not necessarily the only possible nor the best one. In the variety of cultures R. Fonet sees a real basis for different life-worlds and historical alternatives. He develops the idea of interculturality (*la interculturalidad*) as an alternative to globalization.

The idea of intercultural dialogue is used by Fonet-Betancourt not only as a criterion for the critique of the negative consequences of globalization but also as a “regulative idea” in creating an alternative to it. Each culture has the right to the necessary material base for its free development. Thus, intercultural dialogue becomes “an instrument of the cultures for their struggle to have their own worlds with their specific values and goals” (*Interculturalidad*, 85). This intercultural dialogue creates a new framework for philosophical reflection. It breaks the image of world homogeneity and affirms the plurality of cultures which represent various visions of the world. It shows that the present historical world, shaped by globalization, is not limited by its formal, technical, and structural contextuality. It is challenged by intercultural dialogue as an alternative program for the communication of cultures. There is the homogeneous influence of globalization, but on the other hand, there is also the plurality of many cultural worlds in which the diversity of Humankind is reflected.

First of all, human beings have the right to their own cultures. While globalization is standardizing the world, cultures are maintaining the differences and plurality of world views. In contrast to globalization which promises “one world” imposed by the high price of the reduction and equalization of the different, interculturality implies a new understanding of universality as a dialogue of cultures. Culture is not only a realm for the cultivating of the plurality of world views and mutual respect among them. The plurality of cultures presupposes their interrelations and dialogue. Interculturality also serves as a guideline for the concrete realization of the plurality of the real worlds. It requires the reorganization of the world order in such a way that it will guarantee fair conditions for communication between cultures as world views which will materialize in the real worlds. Interculturality is seen by Fonet-Betancourt as a basis for a movement which will organize economically, politically, and socially an ecumenical union of nations and cultures.

Such a movement will universalize tolerance and coexistence. The author calls it a “concrete universality,” which is growing from grass roots, recognizing the particular, the Other, and uniting people in a common goal to make life possible for everybody. This universality presupposes the liberation and realization of all the cultural universes. Fonet-Betancourt summarizes the proposed alternative as: a renewal of the ideal of universality as the praxis of solidarity between cultures.

The philosophy of interculturality reminds people that history and the future are not predetermined and that they are the subjects who are forging the future. Culture can help people in liberating the world and history from the dictatorship of the currently predominant model. While globalization is standardizing the world and presents just one future, interculturality wants to make possible a plurality of alternatives. Which of these futures will become more or less universalized is an issue that must be decided by means of intercultural dialogue. Cultures are realms of freedom, creativity, and realization of the human beings. This freedom is also presented as historical possibilities of innovation and transformation. Intercultural philosophy orients us in this search for an alternative, finding its inspiration in “a creative continuation of the tradition of critico-ethical humanism as an open tradition which transmits the *principle of subjectivity* as a driving force of the foundation of society which champions community and coexistence, and in which everybody lives in harmony at peace with their neighbor and with the nature” (Fonet, 115).

### **View of Globalization from an Ethical Perspective**

Among the existing economic, technological, ecological, and other aspects of the analysis of globalization, the works of the Latin American philosophers are distinguished by developing an *ethical* approach towards globalization. They are grounding philosophically the ethical criteria in order to evaluate the controversies of globalization. The ethical perspective provides us with a holistic view of these phenomena and enables us to evaluate them from the point of view of humanity and its vital interests. The ethical criteria serve as the basis for the critique of the negative effects of the current globalization, which aggravates the ecological crises, underdevelopment, and other global problems. At the same time, the ideas of the meta-ethics of humanity developed by the Latin American and other contemporary philosophers, serve as the normative base for the solution of these problems and the search for positive alternatives to current globalization.

Arturo Roig develops the concept of the “emerging morals” (*la moral emergente*) as an alternative to the dominant ethic associated with rational egoism and neoliberal globalization. The emergent morals serve for the grounding of the principles related to the category of human dignity. Human dignity is negated by the neoliberal “discourse of necessities,” which follows the “forms of satisfaction” typical for a consumerist society. As a contrast, for most of the Third World population, necessities are related to survival. Roig traces the emerging morals to the relevant ethical ideas of Juan Bautista Alberdi, Eugenio Maria de Hostos and Jose Marti in Latin America, as well as to Kant’s theory of the categorical imperative and his ideal of the cosmopolitan Humankind. Of note is a new understanding of Kant in works of Raúl Fonet-Betancourt and in Apel’s Discourse Ethics.

The Latin American philosophers (Arturo Roig, Andriana Arpini, and Raul Fornet-Betancourt, among others) expand the moral concepts of human dignity and justice to the legal concept of human rights. Those are not mere rights of some of the social classes, but rather universal rights of every human being in the globe. The concept of human rights is understood in relation to the necessities, as a whole complex of the political, social, and economic rights which would guarantee a decent human life for everybody in the planet.

Dussel in his recent book *Ética de la Liberación en la Edad de la Globalización y la Exclusión (Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion)* analyzes globalization as a philosophical problem. He warns of the potentially catastrophic consequences of an economic system in which the majority of humanity finds itself deep in poverty. This along with ecological crisis can result in “collective suicide” of Humanity (Dussel, *Ética*, 11).

Dussel makes a survey of the various kinds of “ethicality” in world history, putting modern ethical discourse in an historical perspective. In the first part of this voluminous work “Fundamental ethics” the author analyzes the problematic of ethics in its foundation. He makes a critical analysis of existing ethical theories as representing the different types of grounding ethics. One is a “formal morality,” developed by Kant and Discourse Ethics (with the principle of discursive validity). The other is a “material ethics,” expressed in various ways by Aristotle, Max Sheler, and more recently, Alasdair MacIntyre (with the universal material principle or practical truth). He also analyzes “the universal principle of ethical feasibility,” related to the possibility of obtaining the “good.” Dussel reviews them from the perspective of the Ethics of Liberation. He creatively develops Karl-Otto Apel’s Discourse Ethics, articulating a new level of architectonic distinctions. In addition to the distinction between Parts A (universality) and B (particularity) of Discourse Ethics, Dussel introduces a third “level C,” namely “singularity.” Thus, the “good,” or an act with a goodness claim is neither merely the universality of principles nor the particularity of their mediations, but rather a concrete synthesis of the practical true-valid-possible.

In the second part “Critical Ethics, Anti-Hegemonic Validity, and Praxis of Liberation” the author develops the phases of his theme, presenting his Ethics of Liberation as a well structured unity. He notices a paradox (analyzed in a critique of ideology) that in a system of dominance everything has its “underside”: from the perspective of its victims, the true turns un-true; the valid non-valid; the feasible non-efficient; and the prior good can be interpreted as evil. This system creates its victims through marginality, the poverty of the postcolonial world, the exclusion of masses in the process of globalization. Critical ethics discloses the negativity of such a system (*Ética*, 297). In the architectonic of Dussel’s theory, the categories from fundamental ethics (part one) are used in critical ethics (part two) as their mirror-like “negative” counter-parts. The critical universal material principle becomes a basis for criticism of the system that excludes its victims, who have a life claim, and does not allow them to live. In the critical principle of validity victims come to form a critical community to “understand” the causes of their situation and to project a future alternative (464). The critical principle of feasibility states that the critical community ought to de-construct the system and transform its negative aspects, then construct a new and more just future community of life

and communication. Dussel calls this the “Principle of Liberation.” It states that those who act critically-ethically have an obligation to liberate victims by means of a) the transformation of the norms or institutions which cause the material negativity of exclusion from discourse, and b) the construction of new norms, actions, institutions, and systems of ethicality so that victims can live and participate as equals. This is the claim to a qualitative “development” in contrast to what has come before, and to human progress (559-560).

Dussel’s material ethics is life-enhancing. The reproduction and growth of human life is the main criterion of truth (theoretical and practical), since it is the absolute condition of the possibility of human existence. This criterion is internal to each culture and allows it to establish a dialogue from the universality of the value of human life. The Ethics of Liberation provides a conceptual framework for addressing the issues of underdevelopment and other global problems. There is a growing understanding of the world wide danger of these problems, related to the vital interests of millions of people and even to survival of the human race.

For Dussel, ethics is not an abstract moralization, but rather a basis for human actions, including in the political arena. Based on his ethics, Dussel sketches prolegomena for a future political philosophy. The ethical imperative (production, reproduction, and the development of human life in community) must be implemented by macro-politics for all humanity. It must take political responsibility for the preservation of the biosphere, i.e. ecological environment of human existence. Ecology, overpopulation, and other global problems are an imperative, which requires that a “planetary macro-politics” adopt “new criteria for the production, reproduction, and the development of human life or life will soon disappear.” The reproduction of human life must be considered not only in ecological or bio-ethical aspects, but also in economic and cultural ones. Dussel warned of the potentially catastrophic consequences of an economic system in which the majority of humanity finds itself deep in poverty. As for more concrete measures, he suggests that the politicians implement criteria which guarantee the reasonable use of natural resources, of alternative sources of power, recycling, etc. The political duty is to rescue human life for all humanity and to preserve the biosphere.

Dussel develops a concept of “critical politics.” It asserts that it is necessary to take responsibility for current and future effects which result from political action. When negative effects occur, the critical reflection must identify and denounce the political structure which causes these destructive effects which endanger human life or the environment. Among the victims of dehumanizing systems are postcolonial countries oppressed by the globalization process, excluded populations, Black Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, etc. From the standpoint of the excluded social groups, critical politics should discursively and democratically assume responsibility for all negative effects caused by the political system. Critical politics should propose a positive alternative to the existing political, economic, and educational systems. Thus, “from the struggles for the recognition of those excluded there emerges a new system of rights” (Six theses).

The new global situation requires a new mentality and a new political culture based on democratic relations and dialogue. An international dialogue regarding the problems of contemporary society and the future of humanity is possible

only if it is based on a universally accepted moral groundwork and ethical principles. The ideas of meta-ethics of humanity developed by the Latin American and other contemporary philosophers, serve as the philosophical framework for the discussion about issues of globalization. Their search of the foundation of a universally valid ethics is in keeping with the quest for a rationally grounded universal normative base for the solution of contemporary global problems.

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## INTERVIEWS

### Introduction: "Puerto Rican Studies in a German Philosophy Context: An Interview with Juan Flores"

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Professor Juan Flores, professor of Black and Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College and Professor of Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center, is the author of *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity*, *La venganza de Cortijo y otros ensayos*, and most recently, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (Columbia, 2000). His work combines sociological training, an extensive background in social theory, and immense cultural knowledge to analyze the political implications of various cultural phenomena, from hybrid musical and dance forms to intra-ethnic conflicts to the debates over spanglish. From these local and specific analyses Flores then develops a general account concerning how to approach ethnic identity as an object of study, and draws persuasive conclusions concerning the current debates over assimilation, Puerto Rican "exceptionalism," the emergence of a pan-Latino identity, and the commercial appropriation of Nuyorican artistic expression, among other issues.

What is perhaps less well known about Professor Flores is his background in German philosophy which he studied in Berlin and at Stanford in the German Department. This is what especially provides his work its depth and its resonance with contemporary social theory, since he makes the connections between the commercialization of salsa and the Adorno-Benjamin debates, between street level social critique and Brecht's theory of engagement, as well as introducing those outside of Latino studies to the wealth and originality of Latin American theorists like Edouard Glissant, Arcadio Díaz-Quinones, Carlos Pabón, and many others who have developed analyses of culture from within conditions of colonialism, thus contributing an essential element that the European social theorists have uniformly ignored.

Professor Flores began his teaching career as a Germanist at Stanford University during the Vietnam War, in a period when Stanford came under serious attack because of its direct institutional contributions to the technological and strategic development of that war. Due to his support and involvement in the protests, Professor Flores was summarily fired. Soon, however, he found himself transplanted back to his hometown, New York City, teaching Puerto Rican and Black Studies at CUNY. Some colleagues interpreted this as a large drop in status, but in reality, Flores simply moved from one

area studies to another, and has argued that, in fact, Puerto Rico, in spite of its purported “exceptionalism,” together with the Nuyorican community, provides a rich perspective from which to analyze global phenomena such as cultural imperialism, urbanization, identity formations, and cultural politics, as well as the process of globalization itself. Nonetheless, Flores insistently focuses on local arenas of political contestation and cultural expression, rarely moving toward the broad generalizations often found in social theory. Perhaps the lesson he learned from German studies was mainly a negative example.

Nonetheless, in this interview Flores discusses questions of culture both in a general sense and in relation to particular contemporary problems. He also sheds light on the role philosophy has to play in relation to cultural studies.

### Interview with Juan Flores, Fall 2000

**LMA:** Could you first tell us about your educational biography, especially in relation to philosophy?

**JF:** My formal educational preparation was in German literature, not philosophy, though “Germanistik” has always had a strong philosophical bent. The major “Dichter” were also formidable “Denker,” and you could hardly come to terms with the classical tradition without your Kant and Hegel, Heine or Büchner without Marx and Feuerbach, Mann and Kafka without Weber and Freud, Brecht without Benjamin and Lukacs. A Fulbright dissertation year in Berlin in 1967 exposed me to the activist potential of philosophy, as German student militants plotted their anti-Vietnam and anti-Shah movements by citing chapter and verse from the philosophical tradition. Speakers at the overflowing meetings included the likes of Marcuse, Adorno, Habermas, and Ernst Bloch, and for weighty philosophical reasons they were not always welcomed with the expected deference. But those electric years propelled me further toward philosophy than my Yale literary training, during the waning stage of New Criticism, would have approved. As of then I came to immerse myself in social theory, an interest that was nourished by my first teaching position. Stanford in those years (late 1960s and early 1970s) boasted one of the first German departments to think in terms of “German studies,” and extended their offerings beyond the usual “language” or “literature” option to include a curriculum in “Geistesgeschichte.” Much to my glee I found myself teaching theory as much as literature: a full-year graduate seminar on the Frankfurt School, a mass registration course on Marx and Freud, a reading of Kafka and Brecht through the eyes of Walter Benjamin. Maybe it’s that I never lived philosophy as a “profession,” but I don’t feel that turning to Latino Studies has meant a departure from philosophy as an intellectual avocation. After my initial, rather abrupt shift in the mid-1970s I then landed in sociology, where I found myself quickly at home teaching theory courses (Marx, Weber, Simmel, Mannheim were all familiar ground), and am still doing so, at the graduate level, to this day. I’ve even used the opportunity to offer special topics theory courses on such thinkers as Dilthey, Toennies, Nietzsche and Herder for those theory mongers interested in going beyond the usual structural functionalist or postmodern fare. My access to the original language has been a great boon, and the students have appreciated it accordingly. Beyond that, between philosophy and Latino Studies there is Cultural Studies, another institutional and political space that has allowed me to keep my cherished theoretical energies alive and growing.

And then, of course, Puerto Rican and Latino Studies make for a formidable philosophical project in its own right.

**LMA:** Philosophy in the United States often prides itself on its isolation—that is, its separation from (and general refusal to engage with) other disciplines, especially in what it sees as the “soft” social sciences. You have become a leading theorist in Puerto Rican studies and cultural studies; do you understand your study of philosophy as making a contribution to your work today? How so? Broadly speaking, how do you see the relationship between philosophy and cultural studies?

**JF:** Again, I can’t speak for or about philosophy as a profession, but I’d offer that philosophy is by no means alone in its self-isolation from other disciplines, nor even in its presumptuousness in crowning itself as the supreme, queen or meta-discipline. The proverbial “crisis” is not so much in any single discipline but in all of them, and indeed in “disciplinarity” itself, which is as much a political issue as a philosophical one. But some strong philosophical bearings are needed to break in any definite way with the stubborn guild loyalties of the established disciplines and to undertake trans- or interdisciplinary work with the necessary intellectual openness. The methodological and ideological crisis in literary theory is what opened the door for “cultural studies,” both in its British beginnings with Hoggart and Williams and in its U.S. variant after the demise of New Criticism. But it has been the broad philosophical concerns, rather than turns, however radical, within the disciplines, that give impetus to the cultural studies project, and that constantly keep that project from generating (or degenerating into) still another discipline or entrenched inter-discipline, and its anti-disciplinary premises from tightening into epistemological dogma. The forging of Puerto Rican studies also called for ample philosophical vision, though it has gone largely unarticulated, both in its quest for an integral approach to Puerto Rican life in all its aspects and through the migratory history, but also in tying its intellectual legitimation to the long-standing and ever-pressing philosophy of national identity and anti-colonial liberation among Puerto Rican and other Caribbean and Latin American thinkers.

**LMA:** If philosophy is “its time grasped in thought,” that “time” surely has a “place” as well. Given this, one might understand philosophy as the theoretical articulation of the ideas of a particular people at a particular time. Have you ever thought about the existence of a Latino philosophy, or a philosophical orientation arising from the experiences of Latino communities in the U.S.? Do you think this is a useful way to proceed with the project of making north American philosophy a more inclusive enterprise?

**JF:** As historical and geopolitical context “grasped in thought,” the existence of a “Latino philosophy” presupposes the existence of a Latino “community” of people, or at least a more or less cohesively interwoven set of Latino groups. I argue that for overriding political and economic reasons of a structural kind, those conditions do not exist, though the media and other public representations would have us believe that they do. I agree, though, that such a convergence could well come about, and that it is in some ways already in swing. The challenge is that in my view a salient pan-Latino philosophy would have to look in two intellectual directions at once, that is, toward the background in Latin American philosophy and the theoretical tradition of each of the background national formations, and toward the philosophies

of race and difference that necessarily underlie the project of North American social philosophy. These are not always compatible sources, though I would say that the question of identity? ethnic, national, regional, and hemispheric? does make for some rich interface between them. Furthermore, the contextual imperative, the identifying of a “Latino time and place,” raises the dilemma of particularism and universalism to the center of theoretical attention, and in view of the power relations always at play, makes a “Latino philosophy” necessarily a contestatory, critical one.

**LMA:** The U.S. media sometimes seems to want to pit Latino and African American communities against each other. In the recent election, it seemed as if Clinton presented himself as the candidate for Black Americans, whereas Bush tried to position himself as having a natural allegiance with Latinos. As a professor of both Black and Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, what is your view about ways in which we can unite these groups? What do you think are the main obstacles to such unity?

**JF:** It takes no great philosophical revelation to recognize that the sensational “Latino explosion” in its media and marketing version may have the effect of driving a wedge between Latinos and African Americans, hurling them into a race for who is the “nation’s largest” (and heaviest) minority. The need for new ways of conceiving of cultural identity is of key importance, one which steers its way clear of the Scylla-and-Charybdis of essentialism and unqualified relativism. Of the Latino groups, it is the history of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. that provides the densest link between these two collective experiences and struggles, a reality that is particularly striking in the cultural field. In the Puerto Rican case there is the strongest tug between an identity rooted in language civilization (“Latin,” Spanish, etc.) and one grounded in social and “racial” experience, with African diaspora perspectives providing the corresponding civilizational heritage. As cultural and social philosophers we need to rivet our attention on these seams and intersections of social group “boundaries” as they are affixed in the public mind and by the academic disciplines, including philosophy. Practical forms of coalition-building and alliances are not as far removed from such very abstract considerations as might appear, particularly when we (re-)instate the dimensions of class and colonialism in our tactical and philosophical vocabulary.

**LMA:** Many young people today are very sophisticated in their understanding about the commercial cooptation of cultural productions, and how this tends to blunt any political resistance that culture can have. In *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*, you seem fairly optimistic about popular culture as still capable, even in this hyper-commodified age, of presenting indigenous (i.e. spontaneous and from below) cultural formations with democratizing effects, even while you insightfully demonstrate its cooptation. Why do you retain such optimism? Is it correct to say that your position would be closer to Benjamin’s than Adorno’s in the debate over the political potential of mass culture?

**JF:** I’m still optimistic about popular culture because I see and hear and feel productive agency in people and communities as they articulate their experiences in creative and innovative ways. Not that there’s any cultural space outside of and untouched by the workings of the “culture industry,” not in our time, and by now nowhere in the world. But the interface is not total, and as the origins of hip-hop

illustrate so fascinatingly in the present generation, people’s everyday lives engender expressive responses and practices true to their life experiences yet powerful enough to become relevant and appropriate for people in congruent situations everywhere. Also, personal and historical memory has not been fully colonized by mass culture either, as I try to show in my chapters on Latin boogaloo music and on the Bronx casitas. Admittedly, it’s a stretch from these democratic cultural practices to an explicitly political agenda, but my sense is that a political project which is heedless of these expressions, what I refer to as “moments of freedom,” has no chance of engaging people in a substantial and gripping way. My faith is not so much in the technology per se, in the manner of Benjamin, but of course I would no way partake in the kind of requiem for a critical popular culture the way it is pronounced by Adorno. I guess I’m actually closer to de Certeau and Stuart Hall than to either Adorno or Benjamin, though the Brechtian side of Benjamin, the ideas of the “author as producer” and of epic theater, still have a hold on me and seem pertinent. My emphasis is perhaps compensatory in some way, for the fact of cooptation and duping is the obvious and transparent one, while the persistence of unmediated or counter-mediated cultural production in the midst of generalized commodification goes mainly ignored or denied. Attention to this level or mode of “popular culture” is often dismissed as archaism or as a romantic privileging of “authenticity.”

**LMA:** Also in *From Bomba to Hip-Hop* you take the position that the new pan-Latino identity can be accepted only when paired with more specific ethnic designations; otherwise, meaningful analysis will be diminished. Is that a fair characterization of your view? How do you see the pan-Latino identity in terms of its descriptive adequacy as well as its political effects?

I propose that at least at this stage it is necessary to view the pan-Latino from the optic of the particular national genealogies and not vice-versa, and that the “Latino” category per se remains an empty one. The descriptive adequacy of the concept is no match for its political effects, whether constructive or obstructive of social change. The semantics of domination work in both ways at once: while intent on fracturing potential unity there is at the same time a need to abstract and distill from the historically particular and more or less concrete, and to erase the specific social functions, contexts, and outcomes of cultural practice. Split up and lump together, two complementary faces of hegemony. I make a similar argument about popular culture, that used and abused term, when I argue (citing Stuart Hall) that it can only still have meaning when marked, or reiterated, as a particular popular culture, as in *Black* popular culture. If “people” still exist, it is as “real” social agents and collectivities, freed from the opportunistic usages of “the people” in the commercial media or populist rhetoric.

**LMA:** You don’t seem to share the widespread view among liberal political theorists and even some leftists that identity politics is destroying the possibility of progressive politics in this country? What is your view on this? Have identities been overemphasized?

**JF:** Identity politics can have a deleterious effect on the struggle to build political unity, if conceived in the individualistic and narcissistic way as they tend to be in their more essentialist versions. However, when it has to do with

“identifying” oppressed groups and developing affirmations and strategies of liberation from varied forms of oppression, I agree with Robin Kelley (in *Yo Mama’s DysFUNCTIONal*) that progressive politics have always been about identity, and that there is no “left,” including a socialist or working-class left, with anything like a pristine universalist claim uncluttered by cultural, gender and sexual lines of identity and resistance. And the idea that struggles for black, women’s or gay liberation were distractions from the forward march of “the Left,” and therefore reactionary in their effect, is simply ludicrous to me, and a highly treacherous way of thinking recent political history. It is no surprise, or accident, that such views usually issue from straight white men with a puffed-up sense of their own historical importance and a pathetic resentment over their exclusion from the pantheon of the aggrieved.

**LMA:** You have consistently taken an anti-essentialist position on identity, sometimes suggesting that when considering the special position of peoples in the diaspora such as Nuyoricans, we need especially to give up on notions of authenticity, purity, and the desire for origins. You cite Homi Bhabha’s view approvingly where he valorizes the *in between* that resists cultural totalizations. On the other hand, your work demonstrates many aspects of Nuyorican identity that are substantive, specific, born of a particular immigrant experience, and thus not simply between two cultures but manifesting its own culture. How would you characterize this identity that is in between while simultaneously a presence in its own space? Is there a tension between these tendencies in your work?

**JF:** Yes, the book very much rests on such a tension, as both the title and the sub-title (“Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity”) suggest. And I think you’ve characterized quite well the contradictory tendencies at play as well as the inherently ambivalent identity field of colonial diaspora peoples like Nuyoricans. You’re pointing toward one of the many shortcomings of the book, which is its failure to bring some of the theoretical issues to a philosophical level, or to draw out their philosophical implications. I myself would see that potential connection between *From Bomba to Hip-Hop* and philosophy being most active in the philosophy of history and cultural theory; the tension you speak of can only be addressed (not to say resolved) by taking up questions of historical continuity and change, real and ideal history, movement and tradition, memory and contemporaneity. So it turns out I haven’t had to leave those adventures in “Geistesgeschichte” behind after all. As I continue my study of Puerto Rican and Latino cultures, I still find occasion to dip back into Hegel and Nietzsche, and to resurrect, at least for my own purposes, such seminal philosophical figures as Herder and Dilthey, thinkers who never really made it out of the disciplinary caverns of “Germanistik” but whose thinking bears so strikingly on the contemporary concerns of cultural studies and Latino studies.

## **Introduction: “A Philosophical Account of Africana Studies: An Interview with Lewis Gordon”**

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Lewis Gordon received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale University in 1993, and taught for the first few years of his teaching career in the Philosophy Department at Purdue before accepting his current position as Professor and Chair of Africana Studies at Brown University. He has had an equally significant impact in philosophy as he has had in ethnic studies and Africana studies in particular, charting an original course in both domains. In Africana Studies, Gordon has pursued an expansive concept of black identity that includes not only the Anglo parts of North America, but Latin America and the multi-lingual Caribbean as well. In philosophy, Gordon has resuscitated the tradition of existentialism, which was previously on the wane after the onslaught of anti-humanism, post-structuralism, and other attacks on the theory of subjectivity that is the cornerstone of existentialism. For Gordon, existentialism is a vital tool in the project of developing a new humanities and new social theory, one that can interrogate its Eurocentrism and base itself more fully on the experiences of diverse peoples. Moreover, he argues that existentialism is critical for the developing of African American thought as well as for an analysis of racism in everyday life. He has developed these arguments in four books, *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism*, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, *Her Majesty’s Other Children*, and most recently, *Existential Africana*.

Gordon has thus led a movement toward a reconfigured existential phenomenology among black philosophers, and in addition to the books just listed he has edited four anthologies that collect the developing body of work in this new genre of black existentialism. Building on Fanon here, Gordon’s project has been the development of new phenomenological accounts of embodied black existence. Thus, his is a phenomenology that does not assume that anybody’s lived experience can stand in for the whole and, as feminists have called for, recognizes that we need a multitude of accounts to reveal the complex of cultural meanings distributed through differentially marked bodies. Thus Gordon’s work shows us by example how existential phenomenology can be reformed of its narrowness (European male perspective) and also how it can continue to provide a powerful theoretical framework within which we can address social issues.

This project is a timely intervention helps to correct problems in both postmodernist treatments as well as individualist moral philosophy. Postmodernist treatments often offer an analysis that stays only at the level of cultural representation and never seems to get to the level of human action. An enormous amount of postmodern work ostensibly about “the body” never addresses actually existing bodies. Individualist moral philosophy often seems to operate in a universe where it is assumed that complex reasoning can be used to determine an individual’s choices of action without interference from economic forces or cultural pressure, and where the goal is always assumed to be achieving gender and color “blindness.” Gordon’s account provides a useful

alternative to these approaches, a phenomenological indictment of racism's effects as well as its assumptions.

In this interview, Gordon explains how his philosophical work has informed his development of Africana Studies, how he envisions the relationship between Africana and Latin American studies, the errors he detects in some of the existing work in both these areas, and the role of philosophy developed from the "margins."

### Interview with Lewis Gordon, May 2001

**LMA:** What is your view of the relationship between Africana Studies and Latin American Studies and Latino Studies? These departments do not always have good relationships throughout the country; there are tensions over questions of territory, and I know you've thought about this and addressed it both institutionally and theoretically.

**LG:** Well, the first thing I'd like to say is that I'm delighted you're here because I dig your work as a philosopher and in addition to that these are issues we have been talking about over the years. In terms of the relationship of Africana studies to Latin American studies, these issues are connected to the forms of attacks that emerged in the 1980s and 90s. If you look at the early programs in the late 60s and early 70s, many of them were actually cohesive. At Lehman College at CUNY, for example, you could find Black studies and Puerto Rican studies, and it's often the same faculty at each of them and this makes sense to me. The immediate reason as to why separations have occurred today are connected to a technique used on the part of the right against communities of color. Ultimately what the right would like to do is not only pit Latinos against African Americans but also try, even among people of African descent, to pit immigrants of African descent against U.S. born people of African descent.

This is connected to a form of politics that really limits what kind of resources we can have. The tendency is to set up a situation in such a way that homogeneity prevails. Somehow if you can deal with a monolithic group, if you are among your own kind, if you can deal with similarities, somehow things are supposed to work better not only in terms of sociological identification but also in real progress on resources. In other words, one could say "this is what Latinos get," "this is what African Americans get," "this is what Asian Americans get" and so on. But this approach is based upon a social and philosophical mistake. The first mistake I would say is just straightforwardly social and historical. If we are going to talk about the history of conquest in the Americas, we're going to have to start with Portugal and Spain. That's just a basic premise here. And then if you're going to move to subsequent levels, you have to go through France and through to the British and in the midst of it, from the very moment these individuals landed on American shores, they did not simply say "well, here we are and there you are." The truth of the matter is that in the midst of the conquest there was a great degree of mixture going on. So the fact of the matter is that, on just the basic level of—I'll just use the term now—"racial mixing" has been a founding premise of the American experience. The anxiety over mixture began to emerge as the connection between racism and the political economy was such that it became important to control ultimately not only the behavior of offsprings but also the behavior of women. This is something we know particularly from slavery but it's also something we see in different manifestations in the Americas before slavery.

But even with all of this going on there is a tendency for us to look at questions of mixture on the level of culture, or what is called today creolization, more in terms of the Latin American areas of the Americas and there is a tendency to look at the Anglo areas as if they are pure and homogeneous. But that's an utter falsehood. As we know, it's not only a matter of how far Mexico extended into North America historically, but also if you were to look through the complexity of French speaking regions in the north moving downward, the fact is that communities were always moving through and were migrating. Even if you look at the Caribbean islands there are different periods in which not only different colonizing powers occupied the islands, but also different indigenous groups from different parts of the Americas occupied the islands. So even if you were to talk about a native population, for example, in Jamaica, you're talking about different periods from Arawak, to Caribs, to Tainos, to communities that also came from South America.

Now when you put all of that together, there is no way that there was a case of simple amnesia. There are traces of these communities all over the place, and one of the things that an excellent student of mine, Claudia Milian, points out very persuasively is that there's an error if we look at the question of race in North America purely in, for example, double consciousness terms. There are clearly many manifestations of borders that recur through the North American and the South American landscapes. Similarly, double consciousness occurs through these landscapes as well. But a danger emerges when, in order to chart out a theoretical terrain, borderlands become the Latin American trope and double consciousness becomes the African American trope, although every instance in which one looks at African America, one sees dynamics of borderlands. What are some of these examples? If you go and look at a typical nineteenth century African American novel, there's always a character who is Latino. We use the term Latino today but let's project it onto the past for the moment. There's a character who always raises the question of how one moves through American society. And it's almost always a Latin America character. When we talk about the Schomburg Library for instance, it is founded by an African Puerto Rican individual. When we look through *Diary of an Ex-colored Man*, at the time of Jim Crow one of the tropes in African American society was, if you want to get away from segregation for a moment, you say you're a Cuban or you say you're from another part of Latin America. Outside of that I think it's more than the question of calling in a false identity. The communities were such that you'd find periods where there were African Americans who were intimately connected to Chicano communities, to Cuban communities, to Puerto Rican communities. We see this today on a cultural level in rap.

**LMA:** And your own middle name is Ricardo.

**LG:** Right, my middle name is Ricardo and I am named after a Cuban: my great grandmother's lover, before she met my great grandfather. It's a funny story. All these years I had the name Ricardo, and my grandmother told me one day that my great grandmother was on the docks waiting to meet her Cuban man, Ricardo, to go to Cuba, and he stood her up. And my great grandfather seeing this woman there, talked to her and walked her home. But I guess you know she didn't forget this guy because her first great grandson is named Ricardo!

In the island of Jamaica where I was born, there's also Spanish town. You can see the influences of Spain on the landscape. And there are a lot of things that Puerto Ricans think are connected to the Latin American experience that you find on the Anglo islands in the Caribbean, often in regard to food.

So it strikes me that the project of homogeneity creates a false construction of these new world communities and that if we begin to reexamine them we'll find a whole lot of things that may surprise us. "Apache," the rock Latin tune where early rap music appeared (for those who don't know the group, there was a movie recently called *Snatch* where the preview has this tune in the background) has a conga drum and all of these things going on, and this was the reality in the Bronx when I was there in the early 1970s. When we went out to have street parties or dances in the parks or whatever, there wasn't a very neat divide between things black and things Latino but there was a mixture of them. If you go out to many Caribbean parties, even if they define themselves as Anglo Caribbean, you can play reggae, dance hall, calypso, salsa, merengue, the whole range, and people will dance because it's part of their cultural heritage. You can pick any Caribbean island and just look at the food and you'll find a lot of connections there.

Some people say, "yeah, but what about the African American?" What we fail to realize, however, is that the Africa America we tend to study today is based upon a lot of fiction by my colleagues in the academy. I'll give you an example. I spoke with a colleague the other day who told me that when he was at Howard University, Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates Jr. came to speak, and this colleague, a professor at Howard at the time, raised his hand and said, "You know, there are millions of black people in the Americas and in North America who do not meet the description of a black person you hold." And at that point West and Gates said, well, they had to admit a certain ignorance. Now we have to think about this. We have two eminent scholars projected as the leading authorities on black people and they don't know black people. And the reason they don't know black people is because they look at black people in terms of a fiction of the romantic narrative of the civil rights movement, of a purely Black Baptist community that migrated from the south and for the most part are linked either to the industrial working class or the teaching sector of the service economy. But that was never the whole reality of black people in America. The truth of the matter is that, even in the period of migration, there were always Caribbeans in Harlem, there were always Latinos in Harlem, they were always working together in a way that had a lot of cross-fertilization. We have to remember that Malcolm X's mother was Antigua. We have to remember why Marcus Garvey was able to be as influential as he was. He wasn't just an outsider coming in to talk to U.S. black people; there were a lot of people in the U.S. who were also from these diasporic communities. In addition to that, look at the religious backgrounds: there are large numbers of black Catholics, there are Jewish communities in the Caribbean and in the U.S. (there was a wonderful early study by Howard Brotz on the Black Jews of the Caribbean), and there are many others. Then we have to think about the black Muslim community; the fact is that an estimated 30% of the slaves that came over were Muslim. When we begin to realize this we see that these narratives are too simplistic in terms of looking at the African American community.

**LMA:** It seems that one of the ways some people have suggested we address this problem and go beyond where West and Gates look is with the concept of cultural pan-Africanism, and some African studies departments are organized along that frame. But though this has some real advantages, some argue it produces a kind of division once again between the non-African Latino populations in the Caribbean and elsewhere and the African Caribbean populations. What do you think of pan-Africanism as a solution to the problem that you are raising of the heterogeneity of African diasporic people?

**LG:** I don't think pan-Africanism is a solution to that problem. I think pan-Africanism was needed to address impending genocide. The fact of the matter is that in the nineteenth century the European nations were carving up Africa to do to the indigenous populations of Africa what they did to the indigenous populations of North America, and as we know the indigenous populations of North America were reduced to 4% of their former numbers. The level of carnage, the onslaught of disease and poverty that hit the African continent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century made it nearly successful. I think that is what pan-Africanism as a rallying call is about; its about trying to ensure that a group of people are not wiped off the face of the earth.

The points I made earlier about the study of African Americans apply as well to the study of Latin Americans, in which there is quite often a tendency to write out the African element in Latin America. There are many who'd be proud of the European and indigenous American influences, and then they'll say, "Well, there's a little bit of Africa there." But there's some studies that show that in the Mexican inquisition 80% of those killed were African, so for something that was not significant there seem to be a lot of obsession over it. We already know that in Latin America, in spite of all the emphasis on Mestizaje, there are different expectations in the political economy along skin tone. So there are lots of issues in Latin America that need to be addressed and that unfortunately aren't being addressed. It is similar to the problem in African American studies where some of our colleagues are misrepresenting the communities, and, in some cases, it is deliberate. We are in a period where unfortunately race-representatives can make things up.

Here at Brown we take the position that the African diaspora looked at in an isolated, singular way is a fallacy. We have to recognize that wherever people go, they mix in with the communities that are local, and in that mixture they create new cultural formations. So for us, if you are going to look at the African diaspora in the Americas it means you have to look at its intersection with Native America, Latin America, Europe, and the complexities that connect through Asia. That is why we have courses on African Native America. That's why seven out of our thirteen faculty are also professors of Latin American studies. We have the largest contingent of scholars who are looking not only at blacks in Latin America, but at the complexity of race in Latin America. And when we look at Latin America, we look at it not only in terms of Spanish-speaking groups, but Portuguese-speaking and French-speaking as well. We also try to have a dialogue on the complexity of our other language formations, for instance where Dutch is spoken in parts of the Caribbean, or the complexity of what is happening now as the Asian population grows, and although the predominant mixture tends to be

between Asian and white there are also growing communities of Afro-Asians. And it is not just a matter of racial designation: there is no way that, for instance, Asian businesses in black communities exist there in a purely isolated Asian way. It is clear, for instance, that if you go into New York City and you look at Korean stores, they sell a lot of Jamaican goods. In other words, there is a knowledge that is emerging that is going to create new cultural formations. We recognize that.

The other thing is that we try to recognize that you cannot study these formations in terms of a singular episteme or a singular disciplinary trope. So we do not say we are going to look at it through cultural studies or literature or philosophy or whatever. We start with the question of theoretical, historical (not in terms of the field of history, but of a historical understanding) and artistic approaches to the study of the African diaspora and we try to recruit faculty who work through a minimum of two of these matrices. So that means that one can have a historical or theoretical approach to the African formation creolized through North America and Latin America or who works as an artist who is historically formed or theoretically formed. These are the ways we need to work in order to ask the right questions because the reality is that colonization, conquest, and racism obscure a lot of our vision. To be trained as an historian or a philosopher and simply apply it to the study of people of color leads to fundamental problems because there is a failure to make apparent the way in which those people have been problematized. So what happens is, quite often, we look for a symmetry between white people and communities of color without asking ourselves whether there is a fundamental asymmetry that may change the questions.

But one of the things we are discovering through this way of doing research is that we need to change our understanding of how we look at white people. “White” people have been designated as a category of purity, but once we begin to undermine our notion of purity, we see something that many whites do not see. Many whites already start with the premise that as long as they are with another white person they are not dealing with mixture, but as we know most whites in America marry whites outside of their group in some capacity, Italian-Irish, German-Italian, whatever it may be. And in the midst of this, there are these hidden communities of color, whether it be through name changes or whatever else that might be there. We don’t realize in the American context that we do not really function in the same way that much of the rest of the world functions on the question of marital mixing.

I’ll give you an example. I was teaching a class this semester where this issue was raised and I just asked each student to describe their background. Of course, they said that “I’m just from white people.” Or another person would say that “I’m just from black people.” Well, the blacks were interesting. The black students would say, “Well, my great grandmother’s Irish, my other cousin is from Puerto Rico,” showing of course again that mixture is more apparent with black communities. Similarly, the Latino students in class would say, “Yeah, I have a black cousin here and an Italian cousin there,” and so forth. But then we need to ask two questions. First of all, if all the communities of color have white relatives, why did the white students in their description of their identity cease to have that? Why is it that at a black family reunion or a Latino family reunion, all of these shades come in, including the white ones, but that at the white ones

none of these people exist? Now just the logic of numbers, just basic mathematical principles, would let you know that somebody’s keeping some people out of the reunion.

But something else happened that was interesting. There was an Indian student who was from a particular sect in Hinduism that forbids marriage outside of that community to the point where they had to break a lot of incest rules just to be married. And what she was pointing out that the Americans in the room didn’t realize is that in a lot of other parts of the world people do not marry out of their groups and that what the whites were describing as intra-group marriage, for her, was not at all. She was, for instance, “What are you talking about? The idea that there’s a Catholic married to a Jew or a Catholic to a Protestant?” For her, it was just crazy to think that she would marry somebody not in her religious sect. Absolutely crazy. So already there are complicated issues about how we look at Americans, period. The fact is that as Americanism begins to globalize, it is affecting marriage and relations in other parts of the world. There is a contradiction because as it globalizes it has de facto mixture, but on the de jure level, on the level of so-called policy, it is still functioning according to a theory of homogeneity.

**LMA:** I’d like to ask you about the applicability of your account of anti-Black racism to Latin America. The illusion of purity is not as well maintained in Latin America as it is in North America, but there is still a color hierarchy and there are still families that will deny or try to keep in its closets darker relatives, just as you were describing. Until recently many people, even some academics, accepted the myth that Latin America was a land without racism, a myth that is being exposed as a lie in the last ten years of scholarship. But there are still interesting differences in the way race and racism work in the south versus the north. In your first book on *Bad Faith and AntiBlack Racism* you give an account of anti-Black racism that is very much central to the formation of Mestizaje, which was in many cases a deliberate attempt to identify the essential Latin American identity without blackness. What do you think about the applicability of your analysis beyond the borders of the U.S.?

**LG:** Since I was born beyond the borders of the U.S., it is funny how some critics of my work project their anxieties onto me. So, for instance, there was one critic in England who kept trying to say, “Well, that is your US view,” having no idea that, not only was I born in Jamaica, but I was living in a world where there was complex movement between Cuba and Jamaica, since a third of Cubans are Jamaican immigrants. I have a lot of relatives in Cuba and my case is even more complicated because I am descended from Jews as well and a lot of my Jewish relatives are the ones in Cuba. I also went through the Bahamas. In New York City, there is an on-going reality where if you grow up in the South Bronx you grow up pretty much speaking Spanglish. So there is this reality that I was writing from, experientially, that was already rooted in Latin America because I don’t look at the Caribbean in a purely Anglo way.

But the second thing is this: my first book was meant to address a particular problem. The problem that I was addressing was the failure in race theory to deal with the problem of meta-stability of consciousness and the problem of bad faith. Some took my position to be arguing that racism is *only* a form of bad faith, but that’s not what I was arguing. I

was trying to look at the bad faith dimensions of racism. As we know, there are two classical, and fallacious, views about how to understand race. One is a purely structuralist model: race is only about institutions and structures. It has nothing to do with your individual disposition. And for people that believe there is racism without responsibility, that's ideal because then it is the structures and you don't have to deal with individual relationships. The problem with this view is that the structures are not what's at issue. You can establish demographically how structures affect aspects of social life: how many people have what resources, what are their odds/probabilities, and those things. But most people don't live primarily in terms of those structures. Most people live in terms of meeting friends on the street. People have experiences of betrayal, desire, the whole range of experiences. And that's why the people who tend to go to the other extreme view, the purely subjectivist-psychological models, are able to speak to that reality. The fact is that, for instance, a black person may meet two white people. One may hate black people and the other one may not. So how do you deal with those phenomena?

The problem with the purely psychological model is that it lets the structures off the hook. There are structures that impact people's lives. So we need a philosophical theory that mediates the individual's relation to the structures. One of the things I like is the existential phenomenological distinction between a purely psychological view of consciousness and a view of consciousness in terms of dealing with meaningful phenomena. In this way we can apprehend or understand reality in meaningful terms. What meta-stability means is this: that every effort to render consciousness, experience, or the human being complete finds itself facing its own incompleteness. The simple version of this is if you tell a person you can predict everything he or she is going to do, the person will say, "Yeah, well I'll change my mind." This is one of the ways in which meta-stability works, but the philosophical grounding of it is an understanding of a fundamental incompleteness at the heart of what a human being is. Most forms of racism, for instance, try to deal with a fully defined set of people. But if we take the position that a human being tends to be a more open reality, that there is not a complete definition, then we begin to notice something about how racism works, that racism tends to ascribe a sort of completeness to a fundamentally incomplete reality. Put in another language, the human being is such that every effort to create a law-like generalization of the human being finds itself at the point of the limit of its ability to function as a law.

I know that is very abstract. I can put it into another form. The discussion of bad faith and antiblack racism was meant to address several tropes in the study of race and time and that continuum. In other words, the error is to think that one can have a single complete theory of racism, but what I was trying to show is that you need a multitude of theories working together because we are straining our disciplinary categories. This reflects back on the way I have described Africana studies. So here's an example. If we go back to the structured individualist model, there are two models of structure that were dominating race theory at the time I wrote the book and continue pretty much to this today, except the conservatives have been attacking these quite a bit.

The first one, of course, is the materialist political economy argument which has a rich history in terms of Marxism, but the problem with that view is that it does not address racism on its own terms. It wants to find out what category to subordinate the study of racism to. As we know, the project was to show that racism was a sub-species of class exploitation. But then there was another model that was a post-structuralist position and this tried to look at the question in terms of a semiotic move. The problem with the semiotic move is that it has a tendency to collapse racism into what I call the relational theory of race. The relational theory of race has two structures. One could be semantical, in other words, what is the term 'white,' the term 'black,' or the term 'Asian-American'? A sort of term-analysis. But there is another kind that was more syntactical, more of an examination of the grammar of race, which is a way of looking at how racial semantic terms are produced while holding back the question of what those terms will actually be or say. So this view is a more formalistic conception of race that functions almost like the propositional calculus.

In fact, I had some fun in one of my articles by literally writing a propositional calculus of race and racism. It is an essay I wrote called "Sex, Racism, and Matrices of Desire" and if you look at it, it is a calculus. The thing about the calculus view, linked to the question of syntax, is that it makes a contribution by showing that, although different individuals may look different over time, they will still tend to occupy similar racial categories. So if you start with, for instance, a basic rule in the grammar, such as that the objective is to not be like whoever represents the bottom. Notice you don't have to say what the bottom looks like. But even without concretely, phenomenologically, or even phenomenologically defining who that bottom is, the point is that whoever that bottom is will be occupied by the term 'black.' But this is not literally the color black, as a consequence from the purely semiotic relational view where there could be people today we would consider 'white' people occupying the category that's called 'black,' because the defining feature of it is the behavior of distancing oneself from the bottom. Now we would call those defined as the most distant from the bottom 'white,' but again, by seeing this as a grammar, we can see that whoever these people are is constantly shifting. As long as they occupy the farthest distance, they will be the 'whites.' Again, there is no rule that says whoever will be the 'whites' would look like what today we call the 'whites.'

**LMA:** So you find the semiotic analysis useful?

**LG:** I think it does address an important problem, which is how racial identities change over historical time. It explains why, for instance, people in Africa, in say 400 B.C.E., would have no reason, if they were functioning according to this grammar, to think of themselves as 'white' or 'black.' It explains why there are people who may be very light but who thought of themselves as dark. That at least explains the grammar of race categories, not the concrete question of who will occupy them, or how they would look. But at least we know there is a certain relational thing at work. The problem with this account, of course, is that it is purely formal. It cannot work without the sufficiency of history. So it is a necessary condition of all racial formations and racist realities that there are people in relation to others who will function differently. In other words, you really do not know what race you are until people who are not your race appear. You never have

any reason to think of your own race as racialized, and that is why Fanon, for instance, points out that as long as blacks remain ultimately among blacks they have no reason to think of themselves other than as human beings. As long as whites remain purely among whites they have no reason to think of themselves other than as human beings. But when there is a grammar that is already setting up the differentiation, the levels of differentiation from others, that is when we begin to get these categories.

But now comes something tricky and this is why I wanted to look at the question of bad faith. The tricky thing is that people never simply occupy these relations. Something happens to people to make them see things on the basis of how these grammars are introduced that are not ordinarily what they see. So we know, for instance, if a person who today looks white is defined as black, something happens. It is not as if people just begin to look and say, "Well, the person simply looks 'white.'" A process of trying to find the blackness of and in the person begins. And in the process, certain things happen to the way people see the social world. Now, there are other issues that begin to emerge, for instance, with racism, because racism is not simply the activity of seeing races. It is also the activity of making us believe things that we may not fully believe. For instance, racists may believe that it is impossible for reproduction to occur between their race and a member of the hated race. They convince themselves that the difference is on a level of different species. But as we know, all the evidence around us in the social world shows this to be false. In other words, there is so much evidence against *racist* beliefs that the only way racist beliefs can really persist is through people believing what they do not believe. So it becomes paradoxical. And there are lots of instances of these. Here is another one. I have argued that once you look at this relational view, although racism is still a *de facto* self-other relation by virtue of a relation between one human being and another, it is an internal practice and not a self-other relation. It is a practice in which a world of selves and others exist and then there is a world of selves and non-others, non-selves. In other words, it is convincing ourselves that beings that manifest all the features of otherness, the ethical features of otherness, are not even others. They are below that spectrum.

**LMA:** Is this the idea of the invisibility and the anonymity that you write about?

**LG:** The invisibility and the anonymity connect more to the epistemic features of this, whereas what I've been discussing connects to the sort of false ontological judgment that is made. In other words, they say those are not really people, but the problem is they are and in many ways there is a complex socialization of how we spot people that makes the activity to maintain other people as non-people one that collapses into bad faith. But here is the other point. You notice the narrative I just laid out had a semiotic feature, a historical feature, a feature that connects to epistemology, a feature that also connects to the dynamism of material conditions, and it has a strong position on agency, or in other words, that people have to interact in a social world that puts them into a situation of having to make decisions. So when we put all of this together, then we get to another level and this was the level I was trying to look at in *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*. Given all that complex network of issues to deal with there is another issue we have to deal with which is the meta-

structures of racist analysis. In other words, there is a racist form of theorizing. So that is why in the preface I said, the theorist has to raise the question of the process of articulating theory.

**LMA:** What is the racist form of theorizing?

**LG:** Well, one racist form of theorizing was pointed out by W. E. B. DuBois, that the very beginning of the question already makes the people in question into a problem. So it automatically renders their existence illegitimate in the process of human legitimating practices. So, for instance, if one is going to go study, say, a group of working class white women, then one is going to raise a question of what is it like to be in a situation where the economic options are limited. And then one would begin to say, "Well, it means for them that the economic differentials between a teenager and an adult are very small," which means that there is no incentive to wait to start having children. But when the same study looks at working class communities of color, causal explanations are never given in terms of poverty but rather causal explanations based on race emerge, and as a consequence there is a very different discourse about these women that often sees them as pathological. And the history of this problem goes all the way back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If you look at some of the observations about slave plantations, if you look for example at Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, you notice that some Northerners were commenting on the promiscuity of the young slave women as if they had an option. And what is also interesting is that they were condemning the sexual mores of the slave community in general for taking in and protecting these women, when in fact this was a very humane response that recognized their situation.

If you notice throughout my work, my argument is not only about the creolization of cultures, and the complexity of mixture, but also about the complexity of methodological and identity assumptions. So gender has always informed my work, not as an add-on. What I argue is that because the human being is meta-stable, the human being shifts. Different identity formations manifest themselves in the lives of human beings on a daily basis. Now that means that a fallacy emerges if one simply treats race as a floating category of analysis. Since I have taken the position that consciousness is fundamentally embodied, then it makes a big difference if one's embodiment is male or female. This also points to another form of bad faith in the study of human beings, in which we try to study the human being as disembodied. Or if we study the human being's embodiment as on the level of a thing. In other words, if we take the fluidity and the complexity and the conditions for meaning of the human body out of the human body, then we have a fallacious form of human study.

So what we need to deal with in the study of race and racism is the complexity of what it means to be an embodied reality that is able to be the producer of symbols, the producer of history, and also the source of not only anxiety but also of suffering. One of the things that is often missing when we look at racism, not race, is that racism is a category of oppression and the interesting thing about oppression is that it tends to take on very interesting phenomenological features. Let's not say what type of oppression it is; let's just talk about oppression in general. Oppression limits the options one has to affect humanity, and the more limited the options are the more one begins to exercise one's humanity through a

creative implosive reference of choices. In other words, the more internal you get in your discursive practices to the point where, if your options are so severely limited as in the case of, say, being in a straight jacket in a prison, all you can do is live inside your mind. Oppression always pushes people toward inward evaluation. They are constantly examining, testing themselves, questioning themselves, “Am I good enough?”, “Am I right?”, “Is there something wrong with me?” It happens all the time. Whereas, in a situation where oppression isn’t the guiding feature, thought and choices become more outward directed. One becomes internal in relation to something external, but the something external doesn’t function as a boundary. So that is one of the reasons why, for instance, Fanon focused on the problem of oppression in the quest for actional activity, or the ability to move outward rather than simply to be always introspective. Now, of course, someone may raise the question of the neurotic, in other words, what happens when the highly privileged individual has lots of options but is constantly inwardly obsessed. But the neurotic is *neurotic*: in other words, it would be an error to use mental illness, or some form of mental pathology, as the guiding principle for conditions of normality. And what Fanon points out is that one feature of oppression is that it sets an abnormal condition for normality of oppressed individuals.

**LMA:** So one of the effects of oppression is an increased inward focus?

**LG:** A constant questioning of the legitimacy of the self. You can always spot an oppressed community because the moment they get together by themselves they constantly talk about what is wrong with them. Always. There is always something wrong. The best example, of course, is if you think about African Americans, they are always talking about what they call ‘niggers.’ But not only African Americans do this, just go to the Caribbean, and you will find the same thing. You go to parts of Latin America, you’ll find the same thing. And that is the sign that oppression exists. It is a constant inward deprecation of self, which ultimately begins with the idea of the self as an unjustified problematic being that should not be in the world.

**LMA:** How does this problem relate to the European crisis of self, the crisis that Husserl talks about, that Heidegger talks about, the French post-structuralists all talk about? In your work you have related this crisis to colonialism and to Europe’s—or Anglo-European society’s—relationship with other societies outside of it. And you have suggested that this crisis is actually very much related to Eurocentrism.

**LG:** There are two things about crisis. One of the things I have pointed out is that all crises are ultimately forms of bad faith. But I don’t mean like an individual in bad faith. What crises do is to take humanly created phenomena and treat them as naturalized impositions on the human world. So it is literally a human society lying to itself about the source of its problems. So, of course, we can talk about the crisis of food in the world, but we are throwing away food while people are starving to death. We talk about energy crisis, but this is while in fact in many cases we have a political economy that limits our access to resources for the sake of profit. There are many ways we can develop alternative energy sites. If you pick almost every human problem, if they are humanly generated problems there tends to be human solutions to them. So we tend to conceal from ourselves the source of the solution. For

instance, if we look at the way we talk about the lives of women in the world today in terms of their pursuit of careers in relation to having children, the fact of the matter is that we have set it up to be costly for any woman to have children. It shouldn’t be career or children. We can set up a system in which people can do both. So the first thing I look at in relation to crises is that they are created by human beings.

For me, European crises, as Heidegger and others have formulated them, are really connected to another problem that I also root in bad faith, and that is narcissism. What narcissism is about is seeking the image of oneself that one would prefer, but the image of oneself that one would prefer is often a defective image. One of the best stories of this, a quintessential example, is the story of Snow White. The stepmother wants the mirror to tell her that she is beautiful, as if that is really going to mean that she is beautiful. Now in many ways this is a point that Fanon also argued. Fanon argued that Europe is narcissistic at the period of the ascendance of bourgeois civilization. But there is a certain point in the legitimation of that emergence in relation to rationalization and culture, philosophy, in which they began to try and create a conception of Man that was already self-deceptive. So at the heart of that project was already the narcissistic moment that created levels of deception that not only led to, on the epistemic level, colonization of the rest of the world (because there was already colonization on the material level), but an internal rationalization of the self that also created a self-imposed colonization. So what we find is a desire for a false reality. This has permeated Western philosophy where, in many instances, it is so obvious that it is not referring to the universal. And you can see the way philosophers wriggle and struggle through it by trying to create fictional versions of the people who are met elsewhere. You find it in Hobbes. You find it in Hume. You find it in Kant. And it is more than a question of being hypocritical. I think it is better understood as a problem of narcissism.

The problem that arises, of course, is that an epistemological opportunity cost emerges. So many resources are needed to maintain that narcissism that it begins to collapse into itself. Here is an example, if you think of mainstream philosophy in the US: if you compare the amount of economic resources and the amount of support and ideological energy put into its maintenance with the low quality of what it produces? that indicates that it is already dealing with its own internal decadence. Whereas in the heyday of the ascent of this kind of philosophy very few resources went a long way, produced works of genius, produced ideas that were creating a conception of the North American and the Northern European self that occasioned some envy, but when a genius produces a falsehood, it is an aesthetically interesting falsehood. So there are many of us today who can read the writings of Hegel or Schopenhauer and so forth and we may not take their philosophy of the human to be true but we can appreciate the level of aesthetic genius in the practice of trying to understand it. We could look at the poetry of Byron, Shelley, even in American literature such as with Faulkner and others, we could look at Bertrand Russell’s effort in the various stages of his career, to found mathematics and to create a philosophy of mind. We can appreciate all of this. But once it begins to deal with this issue of decay it has to deal with its particularity. One of the things that was not entertained or taken very seriously during

the ascent of bourgeois Western civilization was its particularity. Today, although it has achieved global status, the truth is that the West is a highly mixed creolized society where there are many variations on language and so forth. The fact of the matter is that when I look at what is presented as uniquely Western or Northern European and North American, I see a particularity. And the question is, why do I see it? There are generations before me who did not see it. Part of the reason is that it is already going through its own historic decay. In order to generate radical new and revolutionary philosophical questions, one doesn't have to abandon Western philosophy, but just to decenter it. One begins to see that insight can be offered through asking different types of questions.

It is interesting that when European and north American philosophy was emerging no one asked whether the questions white philosophers were asking were philosophical questions. Some of the great philosophers did not even believe that they were asking philosophical questions. But these questions generated the process of inquiry that subsequent generations took on, and they became known as philosophical questions. So just as it is problematic to understand the self as having a very static and complete form, similarly it is a problem to look at philosophy in that form. Plato had contributed a lot to philosophy but he did not raise all of the possible philosophical questions. Different problems emerge in the course of philosophy as we begin to take the risk of going beyond philosophy for philosophy's sake. In some of my recent writings I have called this the teleological suspension of philosophy. And what that means is that there is a certain point in which a philosopher is constrained by the conception of philosophy in his or her time. So in the interest of truth that the philosopher is willing to give up philosophy as understood within his or her time, which is paradoxical because philosophy is the pursuit of truth. And that person ends up creating a new philosophy.

For instance, the way many of us may talk about experience in philosophy may be such that we fail to see biography as a philosophical problem. But as we know in our age, biography has emerged as a great social question because we are dealing with serious problems about memory, about accuracy and the understanding of the self. So in our time new questions are being generated that are beginning to generate new philosophical insight. The second chapter of my *Existencia Africana* book, for instance, examines the problem of biography. Then there are other questions that may emerge, for instance, to what extent is the commitment to a liberal conception of philosophy that is premised upon a deontological conception of liberalism, where you suspend the question of the good, a certain problem precisely because truth functions teleologically, or in other words, truth is not a purely methodological affair. There are many instances in the history of science and in the history of philosophy where a commitment purely to method has generated validity but not truth. This is what Merleau-Ponty pointed out in the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*. So once we are committed to truth we are already outside of the immediate deontological consideration of a purely methodological stance. This is something that Nietzsche observed as well in the *Will to Power*.

**LMA:** Could you say more about the teleological conception of truth?

**LG:** The problem of course is that what is meant by “the teleological” is not static. There were times when the teleological was God. There were other times when it was Nature. There were still other times when it might be the Good. But the teleological does not have to be static because the fact of the matter is that the way it may function? this is where, I think, existential phenomenology is interesting? is as a project. It is what organizes what we do and in the process we develop knowledge through what we have learned in pursuing that project. I do not think that many of us come to philosophy purely as a matter of trying to be as whiz kid test takers. Many of us come to philosophy because something moves us to the point that we cannot go back and, it is interesting that philosophers as varied as Dewey and Jaspers and Wittgenstein recognize this. Dewey says there is a special level of inquiry that cannot be settled by an immediate answer. That means that there is something that is functioning teleologically for us. Nishida in Japan, the late Nishida, brought up the notion that philosophy by itself cannot address the greater questions with which we need to deal. He said religion can do it, but in the process of focusing on religion he created a new philosophy, a new movement in the Kyoto school of Zen Buddhism and phenomenology. And what I noticed when I look back in the history of philosophy, when I am not thinking about Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, South America, when I am just thinking purely in terms of looking at many philosophers, I notice something: almost every great philosopher was attacked viciously for not really being a philosopher, for not being true to the method of his or her time. What is pretty clear is that what ultimately motivated the philosophers was something teleological. We can see why a lawyer like Hume is so motivated by certain questions that he writes them without worrying about whether he is a philosopher. It is very interesting that Hume is studied today so much as a philosopher even though in his writings he is almost anti-philosophical. Descartes is so enmeshed in physics and mathematics that he ends up developing a new philosophy. He makes a shift from the course of ontology as first philosophy to epistemology as first philosophy. We have all of these questions about Kant's many itinerate careers before ultimately writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but ultimately if we think about the *Critique of Pure Reason* it was issuing the critique of reason.

So in many ways, what is interesting about the bourgeois revolution is that a lot of the great philosophers of the period were not looking at themselves as philosophers. Many of them were, in fact, on the periphery and few of them were actually in universities. And then if we look at even the nineteenth century, from a big grand theologian like Hegel, in his effort to connect the rational as the real to his conception of God, we get this really provocative creative philosophy. And there is Kierkegaard who is constantly saying he is against philosophy. So it is constant. William James the physician. Karl Jaspers the psychologist who, when he decided he wanted to concentrate on philosophical questions, was laughed at, rebuked, attacked constantly. His rivals sent hostile graduate students into his seminars to make fun of him, and they would write these jokes about him. But Jaspers came out with a three-volume philosophy and he really created a shift. And I notice that if you look in other parts of the world, in India, in Japan, in Africa, you find similar activities.

What is interesting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that we have a group of individuals on the periphery, predominantly out of communities of color, who live in a world in which they are not even looked at as the legitimate embodiments of reason. So they said, “Well, if the legitimate embodiments of reason won’t recognize me, to hell with them. I won’t worry about it.” And they dealt with problems they felt were absolutely necessary, fundamental problems for the direction in which humankind was heading. And in pursuing these questions these individuals began to develop new philosophies. They are people like Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James. There are also some people in Europe, for example, Simone Weil. You find it as well if you look at what Sylvia Wynter is doing. Sylvia Wynter doesn’t worry about whether she is a philosopher, a literary critic, a novelist, or whatever. She has this problem to look into about the human condition and she addresses it. The wonderful thing is that they are generating questions that speak to the present, but they are also giving us tools through which to look at issues in the future. After having looked at these works, a lot of what is considered mainstream professional philosophy not only looks parochial and mundane, but also looks dated. On some levels it also begins to look inane. Sometimes when I read the works of what is considered more mainstream thinkers, to me they look 150 years behind in their content and level of thought. They have no idea that thought has developed beyond them. And one of the proofs of this has to do with the amount of resources dedicated to their efforts. The idea that a group of individuals from the Third World with no university affiliations, can, while fighting revolutionary struggles, sit down and begin to reflect upon everything from socio-genesis to phobio-genesis to problems of incompleteness and legitimation crises in the human sciences—the very fact that they can do this while mainstream individuals have large grants to go and get Ph.D.’s, then become deans of their first world universities to make sure more money is invested in classes so that three individuals can study a very parochial philosophical method. You know, that sort of a thing. It is a sign that there is a decadent situation in mainstream philosophy.

The thing that that we have to think about when we look at these Third World or peripheral writers is, *why* did they write with the level of sophistication that they did? I have written a lot on Fanon so I will use him as an example. Why did he write the way he wrote? It would surely have been easier to write simply demagogic revolutionary tracts or pamphlets, to write as a journalist or to write a very moment-by-moment text. What was he doing in engaging Merleau-Ponty on the body? What was he doing by going through the specifics of Engel’s position on violence? What was he doing by going through Jaspers on angst or the question of the limitations of Hegel on recognition? Now the way I understand it is this? I think that once thinkers are guided by great questions, then even in their concrete practices they need to address these questions. So many of these people are already temporally displaced people. They are as people who are cast away on an island putting messages in bottles that are going to float to the future. And in many ways our job in the future is to push it further. I think that every one of these people takes very seriously the value of pushing the human condition to its limits. And in many ways ultimately that is what philosophy is about. I have always worked with the distinction between the professional technician or the merely

professional scholar and the philosopher. I think the philosopher is so moved by struggling with problems of reality that even philosophy is going to be subject to critique and even philosophy may fall, but that is a paradox, isn’t it? Because in taking that risk, philosophy flourishes.

By the way, I do not mean to deprecate the work of the merely academic scholar. I think that there is too much anti-academicism going on in the world right now. Academic work is very important, noble work. I think that being purely academic is good for the history of philosophy but not for the creation of philosophy.

**LMA:** What is the direction of your work now? What are the questions that you continue to be interested in working on now?

**LG:** First, I do not look at my books as complete texts. I write books to generate critical exchange and to learn from critics. What people have always asked me is how I write so much, but it is because I do not take the view that one writes a perfect text. I see my writing as part of the social world, so I write to get the discussions going. I also take the position that when we throw our ideas out there the unexpected comes back to us. My work has generated a lot of discussion, and lot of things have come out of that over the last 8 years. It’s funny, I’ve only been writing for 8 years.

**LMA:** I remember I first met you when you had just finished grad school.

**LG:** That’s right, so it’s only been 8 years. A lot of things have happened that I never expected. So one of the things I learned is that what I write takes on a life of its own and it creates things that come back to me in very unusual ways. But in the process, what I was doing was trying to work on my philosophical ideas. I tend to work out the more abstract philosophical problems I am concerned with through a concrete, particular subject matter. The book on bad faith and antiblack racism was laying the foundations of a particular view of the human sciences. A lot of Fanon scholars missed the point of my book, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*. I didn’t write that for people who wanted to find out everything Fanon did, but because Fanon had a set of ideas that were useful to me and I developed them into my own ideas. *Her Majesty’s Other Children* is ostensibly a work of social criticism but was generating new theory. That is where, for instance, some of the discussion around semiotics and relationality first came out. My position on the role of the aesthetic in revolutionary practice is that it should not purely be a functionalist model (which is my position on a lot of issues in regard to the intellectual). *Existential Africana*, although initially conceived as trying to work out the parameters of an Africana existential philosophy, began to develop new theory. There is a chapter in there on the problems of human sciences, on DuBois and the theory of oppression, and there is a theory on biography. I also address the question of how to understand the relation of religion to theology. And there is a philosophy of writing in there. Now these are the fragmented versions of these theories, but some people are on to me. Right now I am heavily involved in institutional building at Brown. And a lot of my immediate writings are addressing theoretical dimensions of building the field. So I am in the midst of disciplinary struggles and struggles against what I call disciplinary decadence. But I do plan to devote my forties to putting a lot of these ideas developed in my

earlier work all together into a philosophy that will take up the question of philosophical anthropology. I want to go into the details about why, for instance, I defend a view that reason should not collapse solely into rationality. I see rationality as a subspecies of reason, but not the whole of reason. There is a tendency, for instance, in the modern world and in a lot of contemporary discourses to create an isomorphism between reason and rationality. I think that is an error.

**LMA:** Existentialism has often had a critical view of reason, or at least of the total reliance on reason. Could you say more about how you understand reason?

**LG:** Reason must be able to assess rationality. So, for instance, reason may be such that it functions on the level not only of the teleological, but also on emotive levels as well. One can be reasonably angry. But the idea that the dialectic is between rationality and irrationality is false. There are writings written in the spirit of non-rationality and that is where reason comes in. Reason has to be able to assess a lot of these categories. Why isn't reason looked at on the level of aesthetics? Not as something that is brought in to organize aesthetics, but as aesthetics. How do we deal with reason properly in dealing with religion? How do we deal with reason properly on the level of categories like intuition? On different levels of cognition? It strikes me that we need a renewed understanding of the discourse of reason. This has been a discussion in phenomenology as well because in order to be able to assess philosophy phenomenology had to be able to suspend the question of its own ontological legitimacy. So that means that the scope of reason might be much broader than we think. I tend to look at rationality as more instrumental in the way Hume tended to—Hume said reason but I think he was talking more about rationality—that it is about how to get what you want, how do you do this or that to get that. But I think reason is greater than that. Reason connects to how we deal with everything, and it is connected to many forms of love. I don't think rationality can play a role in the reflective understanding of a dance. I think rationality is at work at the moment of dancing. So I have to develop a full philosophical treatment of the question of reason. I also have to deal with the question of how does one do philosophy if one rejects the notion of systemic and systematic completeness. So these are some issues I have to deal with.

This is a full-scale work; the tentative title is simply *Philosophical Treatise* merely because I will be dealing with so many issues. But many of them have been touched on in my other writings, such as the questions of essence, of possibility, of indexicals, of the complexity of how one deals with temporality, duration, the relationship of the ontological to the epistemological. There are questions also about how we deal with thought beyond the question of simply philosophical thought. The question, for instance, about the scope of religious thought. I am also concerned with the question of how do we deal with patterns of meaning and questions of repetition. But I will begin to write this once I am finished with a lot of the institutional building work I am doing, or at least have contributed my part to this work. The shorter work that I am doing right now is to write a book on mass and class. It strikes me that the distinction between mass and class has been blurred in contemporary American society.

**LMA:** 'Mass' meaning like the masses?

**LG:** Well, the concept of mass, or what it is to be in the masses versus a class relation. I have also been asked to put together a compendium on African-American studies and a lot of the positions I have spoken to you about will be there. This question of the need to restructure the way we think of African-American and Latin American studies. That's going to be a big collective effort. I am also writing a short work on problems of value and decadence. I have been writing for the past two years a series of essays on moral philosophy, ethics and problems of nihilism and decadence. These questions emerged actually through dealing with another more specific problem, but it struck me that what was informing my analysis were those questions.

**LMA:** Okay, the last question of this installment and I hope we can do this again in another year or two. You are one of the most hopeful people I know. And we are living in hard times, the Right is on the rise, the Republicans have engineered a successful coup, neo-liberalism has taken over Latin America, there is a terrible crisis in Africa of AIDS, and one could go on. So how do you maintain your hopefulness through it?

**LG:** Several things. One of them is that I stay focused on the fact that there are problems greater than me. The second thing is I take very seriously that every individual human being is ultimately asked to contribute his or her share. The third thing is that it is really sobering when one looks through the sort of intellectual history I look through. I look through the work of people who lived in times that were even bleaker than ours. It is incredible to me to think about the people we study—you know, W.E.B. DuBois or Alexander Crummel or Anna Julia Cooper or Maria Stewart—and the abilities they had where they could easily converse with us in the present. What must it have meant to have lived in the past they lived in with those abilities. The closest thing I could imagine to it is being in a straight jacket in a deprivation tank and trying to leave some message for the future. And it struck me that they had so many victories where it really looked like they would fail. Harriett Tubman had no reason to believe that by the 1860s there would at least have been a law rendering slavery illegal. She had no reason to believe it and it didn't matter. So ultimately I take the position that there are just things we need to do, period, and I focus on doing them. The question of success, on a large level, I don't have the answer for. But on the shorter term levels, I have been fortunate in that most of the struggles I have been involved in are ones where we have had a lot of success. And I see the immediate impact of that. But again, I have always taken the position that a genuine commitment to truth is such that you don't worry about those factors. You just do what you need to do, period.

**LMA:** Thank you.