

REVIEWED BY FALGUNI A. SHETH

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

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Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

Bernardo J. Canteñs, Editor

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FROM THE EDITOR

Bernardo J. Canteñs
Moravian College

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I begin my tenure as editor of the APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy. With the opportunity to direct and guide the Newsletter comes the responsibility to ensure its continued success and progress. My vision for the next five years will be to sustain the high quality of publications the Newsletter has had in the past; to encourage discussion on diverse issues and views, particularly those that are marginalized in mainstream philosophical journals and forums; and to provide a genuine service for philosophers who are interested in Hispanic/Latino philosophy. To achieve these objectives, I will adopt certain editorial strategies: (1) all submissions will be blind-reviewed by at least two referees; (2) one issue per year will be devoted to a theme that will be announced in advance so prospective authors have time to prepare articles, commentaries, and replies; (3) one issue per year will remain open for topics on any subject relevant to Hispanic/Latino issues; (4) more book reviews will be solicited and encouraged with the hope of increasing the visibility of the work that is being done in Latin American philosophy and Hispanic studies; (5) new sections with information on the committee members and biographical information about the contributors will be added to the Newsletter.

The Newsletter should be an effective vehicle for philosophers to discuss important and relevant issues related to Hispanic/Latino philosophy, and that it will continue to promote, in the profession, the significance of Hispanic/Latino philosophical issues as well as the importance and relevance of Latin American philosophy for the Western philosophical tradition. The Newsletter should represent the plurality of views and issues that compose the growing and diverse landscape of work in the field. I hope that the Newsletter can serve as a reliable resource for meaningful dialogue among the members of the profession.

I thank Susanna Nuccetelli, chair of the APA Committee on Hispanics, for her service to the committee over the past five years, as well as all the members of the committee for their support of the Newsletter. I would like to welcome Eduardo Mendieta as the new chair of the APA Committee on Hispanics. I would also like to thank Gregory Gilson who served as interim editor of the Newsletter in 2007 and co-editor in 2008.

The Fall 2008 issue of the Newsletter begins with "Did the Aztecs Do Philosophy?" by Alejandro Santana. Santana begins by analyzing Miguel León-Potilla's arguments in support of the thesis that the Aztecs did philosophy, as expounded in Aztec Thought

and Culture. Santana argues that León-Potilla's arguments fail to demonstrate his thesis because they rest on a vague notion of philosophy. Santana argues in support of the thesis that the Nahuatl people did do philosophy on a more precise conception of philosophy than León-Potilla's. The importance of Santana's work transcends Latin American philosophy in two ways: first, if his arguments are successful, we must reconsider our understanding of "Western Philosophy," which begins with the ancient Greeks. Second, Santana's arguments broach the important and perennial philosophical question: What is philosophy? What are its boundaries, and how should they be defined? Next, Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert introduces three articles that speak to the relationship between German and Latin American philosophy: first, "Humboldt's American Legacy" by Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert; second, "German Philosophy and Latin American Philosophy: From Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832) to 'Krausismo'" by Claus Dierksmeier; and third, "From Revolving Time to the Time of Revolution: Mariátegui's Encounter with Nietzsche" by Omar Rivera. These three articles contribute to our understanding of Latin American philosophy's status and position within the Western philosophical tradition, particularly nineteenth-century German philosophy. Finally, Falguni A. Sheth provides an insightful and critical review of *Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identity*, Jorge J.E. Gracia (ed.) Cornell University Press, 2007.

FROM THE CHAIR

Eduardo Mendieta
Stony Brook University

I join all of our colleagues in the committee and the Hispanic/Latino philosophical community in thanking Susana Nuccetelli for her work as chair. She has done an outstanding job by providing leadership and making sure that the broad interests and traditions of Hispanic/Latino philosophy were amply and fairly represented in the sessions the committee has organized under her chairship. I hope to continue that tradition and commitment. It is thus with great pride and hope that I return to the committee, but now as its incoming chair. As a former member of the committee and founding editor of the committee's Newsletter, I was the beneficiary of the mentorship and encouragement provided by the then directors, Jorge Gracia and Linda Alcoff. They inspired me and provided guidance in my own professional development. I hope that I can also live up to the tradition and example that Jorge and Linda established and provided in the committee. In the next few years, I look forward to working closely with the present and incoming members of the committee to organize sessions that will reach out to our philosophical community and that will

provide the kind of space in which younger scholars can be nurtured. Our committee's work in mentoring and sustaining future Hispanic/Latino scholars and professors is undoubtedly indispensable. But no less important is the work the committee does in educating other colleagues in the profession about the work that Latino, Latin American, and Hispanic philosophers have contributed to our discipline. Additionally, I hope that over the next few years, the committee will work actively in fundraising to endow permanently the prize that the APA presently funds to encourage, acknowledge, and honor work on Latino and Latin American philosophy. I have also made it one of my goals to pursue different venues to encourage greater and more substantive cooperation with colleagues in Latin America and Spain. But perhaps the most important thing that I want to say as your incoming chair is that I look forward to hearing from you about what kinds of topics, themes, figures, problems, and so on, you think our committee should be paying attention to. I also look forward to any suggestions about how the work of the committee can be improved and made to have a greater impact within and outside the APA.

Committee Members

Chair

Eduardo Mendieta

Members

Jesús Aguilar (2009)

Renzo Lorente (2011)

Gregory Gilson (2011)

Agnes Curry (2010)

Gregory Pappas (2010)

Steve Tammelleo (2009)

Sheryl Tuttle-Ross (2009)

Gregory Velazco y Trianosky (2009)

Bernardo Canterñs (ex officio)

in our own philosophical quest to interpret, understand, and evaluate their thought.

Second, León-Portilla's argument provides an interesting case for revealing common meta-philosophical presuppositions about the boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy or whether such a boundary exists. To give his argument, León-Portilla presents a sample of song-poems that seem to address traditional problems in philosophy. If considered philosophy, these texts would challenge some common pre-conceptions on what philosophy is and what separates it from non-philosophy.³ This challenge is similar to that which confronts us when viewing odd pieces of abstract or pop art. Consider, for example, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*,⁴ or suppose that I, a non-artist, arbitrarily scribble lines on paper. Some of us might be puzzled about how to interpret such work as genuine art, and it might compel us to ask what legitimate grounds, if any, determine whether or not these works are such instances. In the same way, the Nahuatl song-poems might leave us puzzled about how to interpret them as genuine philosophy, and it might compel us to ask what legitimate grounds, if any, determine whether or not the Nahuatl texts are such instances. To be sure, this problem confronts Western thinkers who see philosophy as requiring some form of linguistic analysis, conceptual clarification, or systematic argumentation. Yet it equally confronts philosophers who would have no qualms about regarding the Nahuatl texts as genuine philosophy. However this challenge is met, one is nonetheless confronted with the problem of determining what legitimate grounds, if any, distinguish philosophy from non-philosophy.

Ultimately, then, I am addressing León-Portilla's argument in order to address the question of whether the Nahuas explicitly did philosophy, which thereby leads to the question of what distinguishes philosophy from non-philosophy. In this paper, I will argue that León-Portilla's argument is inadequate, but despite the problems with his argument, it is still plausible to think the Nahuas did philosophy. More specifically, I will argue the Nahuatl texts bear significant similarities to characteristics that we philosophers commonly associate with genuine philosophizing.

To address the question of what distinguishes philosophy from non-philosophy, I will suggest that philosophy is best understood as a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" concept. On this construal, there is no one thing that is common to all instances of philosophy; instead, we see, as Wittgenstein says, "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (PI, 65). Given this, there is no sharp boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy; instead, there are closer and further similarities to characteristics that philosophers commonly associate with genuine philosophizing. Seen from the prism of this "family resemblance" view, it might have at first seemed that the Nahuatl texts exhibited characteristics that only slightly resembled those that we associate with philosophy, but upon closer examination the texts bear a much stronger resemblance that places them well within the domain of philosophy.

In what follows, I will first present León-Portilla's argument, including all of the texts that he cites. Second, I will pose my main objections to his argument. Third, I will give my argument that the Nahuas did philosophy and address the issue on what distinguishes philosophy from non-philosophy.

I. León-Portilla's Argument

To begin with, León-Portilla asks, "Did the Nahuas concern themselves with the traditional problems of philosophy? Did they experience, in addition to a religious-mythical *Weltanschauung* that human restlessness resulting from doubt

ARTICLES

Did the Aztecs Do Philosophy?

Alejandro Santana
University of Portland

Introduction

In *Aztec Thought and Culture*, Miguel León-Portilla argues that the Aztecs, or Nahuas, addressed traditional problems in philosophy.¹ In this paper, I will present and evaluate León-Portilla's argument for his view. This is important for two main reasons. First, it will help determine how we approach the philosophical study of the Nahuatl people and their thought. León-Portilla presents the most sustained argument for the idea that the Nahuas did philosophy. If his argument is adequate, then we may engage the Nahuas as partners in philosophical inquiry. However, if his argument is inadequate, then we must either correct its mistakes or find other reasons to support his conclusion. But if his conclusion is simply false, then we would be mistaken to engage the Nahuas as philosophical thinkers, as we do the ancient Greeks. Although it would still be true that the Nahuas had a philosophy, which they certainly did, determining that philosophy would be primarily an interpretive historical and anthropological matter.² We wouldn't have to engage them as philosophical thinkers, but only as informants

and a sense of awe which gives rise to rational inquiry into the origin, essence, and destiny of man and the world?"⁵ To answer this question, he first offers a definition of philosophy. Although León-Portilla acknowledges that his definition might not be universally accepted, he takes it to be at least a non-controversial definition:

To establish a universally acceptable definition of philosophy would be a formidable task. Genuine philosophy arises from the explicit perception that problems are innately involved in the essence of things. A sense of wonder and mistrust of solutions derived from tradition or custom are requisite to the formulation of rational questions about the origin, the true nature, and the destiny of man in the universe. The philosopher must experience the need to explain to himself why things happen as they do. He directs himself to the meaning and true value of things, seeking the truth about life and life after death, even speculating about the possibility of knowing anything at all of that afterlife where myths and beliefs find their final answers.⁶

With this definition, León-Portilla then gives an affirmative answer to his main question. As evidence for his answer, he cites the following Nahuatl poetry from the *Colección de Cantares Mexicanos*.⁷

Text 1:

What does your mind seek?
Where is your heart?
If you give your heart to each and every thing
you lead it nowhere: you destroy your heart.
Can anything be found on earth?⁸

Text 2

Where are we going?
We came only to be born.
Our home is beyond:
In the realm of the defleshed ones.⁹
I suffer:
Happiness, good fortune never comes my way.
Have I come here to struggle in vain?
This is not the place to accomplish things.
Certainly nothing grows green here:
Misfortune opens its blossoms.

Text 3

Do flowers go to the region of the dead?
In the beyond, are we dead or do we still live?
Where is the source of light, since that which gives life
hides itself?

Text 4

Truly do we live on earth?
Not forever on earth; only a little while here.
Although it be jade, it will be broken.
Although it be gold, it is crushed,
Although it be quetzal feather, it is torn asunder.
Not forever on earth; only a little while here.

Text 5

Do we speak the truth here, oh Giver of life?
We merely dream, we only rise from a dream.
All is like a dream...
No one speaks here of truth...

Text 6

Does man possess any truth?¹⁰
If not, our song is no longer true.
Is anything stable and lasting?
What reaches its aim?

According to León-Portilla, these texts provide evidence that the Nahuas indeed took the appropriate philosophical attitude expressed in his definition of philosophy: they attempted to formulate abstract philosophical questions about humanity and the world; they came to appreciate the difficulty of providing answers to these fundamental questions; and since their traditional beliefs offered answers to these questions, they questioned their traditional beliefs. Text 1 shows the author to question whether one could find satisfaction on earth. The poet also supposes that one could not give one's heart to everything, for doing so would eventually lead nowhere. Given this, the author seeks something real and of lasting value. Text 2 shows the author to address the meaning of human life and the struggle it involves; text 3 questions what happens after death. Since Nahuatl religion and mythology offered answers to these questions, León-Portilla takes these texts to be evidence that their authors were unsatisfied with the answers their traditional beliefs provided. "They doubted; they admitted that much had not been adequately explained. They longed to see with greater clarity the real outcome of our lives, and, through this, to learn what importance there might be in this struggle."¹¹ Texts 4-6 show awareness of the difficulty of establishing objective truths in a world in constant flux. The author(s) of these texts question(s) the possibility of ever establishing truth in a world that seems more like an ephemeral dream than an experience of a durable and stable reality. The texts reveal an attempt to discover foundations or "true basic principles" with which to interpret life and the ever-changing world.¹²

León-Portilla therefore concludes, "The Nahuatl enunciation of such questions is sufficient evidence that they were not satisfied by myths or religious doctrines. Their writings evince a vigorous mental development, and interest in the value, stability, or evanescence of things, and a rational vision of man himself as a problem."¹³

II. Objections to León-Portilla's Argument

Regarding León-Portilla's argument, one could raise objections about the authenticity and historicity of the texts that are cited.¹⁴ One might also object that the term "philosophy" cannot be appropriately applied to what the Nahuas did.¹⁵ León-Portilla has offered responses to these objections, but discussing them is beyond the scope of this paper.¹⁶ For this paper, I would like to focus on problems with his definition of philosophy. We have seen that León-Portilla offers what he takes to be a non-controversial definition and then argues that the Nahuatl texts fit his definition.

The problem with the argument is two-fold. To begin with, León-Portilla's definition is far from non-controversial because many would find it unacceptably imprecise and broad. One might concede that his definition identifies several qualities that are associated with philosophy, but nonetheless object that it ignores many important qualities that philosophy involves. For example, philosophy involves the systematic attempt to answer fundamental questions by giving reasons for those answers; it also involves addressing objections, clarifying concepts, making distinctions, among other things. One could also object that León-Portilla's definition is so broadly formulated that it would include poetry, theology, various forms of fictional literature, and perhaps visual art. The problem is not that philosophy cannot somehow overlap into these areas; instead, it is that the definition is so broad that it ex hypothesi includes the Nahuatl texts.

This raises another problem because León-Portilla offers no argument for his definition. This consequently reveals León-Portilla's argument to be deeply question-begging, for it leads one to ask why one should accept this definition of philosophy. Thus, León-Portilla's argument does not establish that we can regard the Nahuatl texts as genuine philosophy; instead, his argument seems problematic from the very start.

Now, we might agree that these song-poems are "philosophical" or "philosophically inclined" insofar as they pose philosophical questions and sometimes give speculative answers. But we might also think it more appropriate to say that the Nahuas did something only slightly resembling philosophy, for the texts leave out much of what philosophy involves.

This might seem to be a bit of philosophical hairsplitting but, as I mentioned above, this issue is important because it determines how we approach the Nahuas and their thought: Should we approach them as philosophical amateurs who arbitrarily painted quasi-philosophical lines of thought, or should we approach them as having done something more intentional and philosophically sophisticated? It is also important because it poses an interesting test case for the plausibility of our own preconceptions about the boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy: What legitimate grounds, if any, determine whether these texts are philosophy, non-philosophy, or a borderline case?

III. My Argument that the Nahuas Did Philosophy

To address the former question, I submit that it is plausible to think the Nahuas did philosophy. Let me begin with characteristics that we philosophers often use to describe the subject matter, origins, aims, and methods of philosophy.¹⁷

Regarding subject matter, we might note that (1) philosophy addresses, but is not limited to, the various problems or questions that make up the generally recognized areas of philosophical investigation: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, etc.¹⁸ Alternatively, we might note that philosophy is primarily concerned with (2) living a worthwhile, meaningful life or living in the right way.¹⁹

Regarding origins, we might say that philosophy begins with (3) wonder, (4) reflection, or (5) the clash between traditional beliefs and the need for justification.²⁰

Regarding aims, we might mention that philosophy seeks (6) wisdom, (7) knowledge, (8) a clear, comprehensive, and plausible worldview, (9) the elimination of doubt, confusion, or nonsense, (10) intellectual liberation and autonomy.²¹

Regarding methods, we might note that philosophy proceeds by (11) formulating and answering fundamental questions, (12) critically examining and evaluating fundamental assumptions, (13) giving justification, (14) raising and addressing objections, (15) analysis, (16) clarifying concepts, or (17) synthesizing ideas.²²

Given that philosophers use these characteristics to describe genuine philosophical thinking, then I submit that the Nahuatl texts can be plausibly seen as philosophy. In my view, a straight-forward reading of the Nahuatl texts shows that they have many of the characteristics listed above.²³ They certainly (1) address what we generally recognize to be philosophical issues (i.e., value, the meaning of life, life after death, knowledge, and truth). All of the texts (2) show a concern with living a worthwhile or meaningful life, and text 1 shows a concern for living in the right way. Insofar as they address these issues, they also exhibit a sense of (3) wonder and (4) reflection about them. Since these questions are raised despite the fact that Nahuatl traditional beliefs provided answers to them, there seems to be (5) a clash between traditional beliefs and the need for some kind of justification. Since the

author(s) of text 5 and 6 sought fixed truths about the world, the author(s) sought some kind of (7) knowledge, at least (8) a comprehensive and plausible worldview, or at the very least (9) the elimination of doubt, confusion, or nonsense.²⁴ Given this, one could argue that the author(s) sought to obtain a degree of (10) intellectual liberation and autonomy from their traditional beliefs. All of the texts (11) formulate and attempt to answer fundamental questions. Given the nature of their questions, they (12) attempt to critically examine and evaluate fundamental assumptions. Thus, the Nahuatl texts seem to have many of the characteristics that we generally associate with philosophical thought in terms of subject matter, origins, aims, and some philosophical method.

Granted, the texts do not show much in the way of (13) giving justification, (14) raising and addressing objections, (15) analysis, (16) concept clarification, or (17) synthesis of ideas. Aside from their use of poetic verse to express their philosophical thought, it is hard to determine what other methods the Nahuas might have used. But this observation should not lead us to exclude the Nahuatl texts from philosophy. Many of the Pre-Socratics are lacking in one or more of these characteristics as well, but we still include them in the philosophical canon. Given this, then, consistency requires that we treat the Nahuatl texts similarly. And we have seen that the Nahuatl texts bear a substantial resemblance to a number of other characteristics that we associate with genuine philosophizing. If so, then consistency requires that we include them in the domain of philosophy on these grounds. We therefore have reason to regard these texts as philosophy and their authors as having done philosophy.

I should note that the catalogue I have presented is largely drawn from philosophers who are firmly within the Western philosophical tradition. But I should also emphasize that I do not intend to suggest that Western philosophers have or should have a privileged place in determining what is or is not philosophy. Instead, I intend to provide a sampling of views expressed by a variety of philosophers who view philosophy from a variety of perspectives. To this end, I have included feminist, Native American, and Latin American perspectives in the catalogue. I have also included perspectives of philosophers who have pluralistic views on the nature of philosophy. So, I have worked to make the catalogue substantial and reflect a diversity of views on philosophy, but I recognize that it can be improved by being made more comprehensive and exhaustive. For example, the catalogue could include critical post-modernist perspectives. It could also include South and East Asian perspectives, as well as African American, African, and Middle Eastern perspectives. With this, I recognize that the generality with which I draw my conclusion is limited by the standard I used to draw it, but I think it is safe to say that many philosophers would not take issue with the characteristics that I have provided above, although they might take issue with the fact that various other perspectives have not been included.

Yet others might take issue with my inclusion of feminist, Native American, and Latin American perspectives, as well as my suggestion that the other world perspectives should also be included. To some, one or more of these areas of thought do not do philosophy either. It is beyond the scope of this essay to address this issue,²⁵ but it is important to note that this, once again, raises the issue of what should or should not be included in philosophy. Ultimately, it raises the latter question about what grounds, if any, distinguish philosophy from non-philosophy, a question to which I will now turn.

Now, by giving my argument, I do not intend to argue that the Nahuatl texts can now be construed as on the philosophy side of a distinct boundary outside of which is non-philosophy.

Indeed, I should make clear my denial of a sharp distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy.

I say this in response to what seems to be a common inclination to think in terms of sharp boundaries when considering whether a text is or is not philosophy. For example, we might say that philosophy is essentially a reflective activity grounded in wonder and thereby include the Nahuatl texts into the domain of philosophy; or we might say that philosophy is essentially concerned with giving justification and thereby exclude the Nahuatl texts. Indeed, one is especially prone to think this way when attempting to exclude a particular text from the domain of philosophy or a group of people from the domain of philosophical thinkers. If so, one might be inclined to think of philosophy as having an “essence” definable by one or more of the characteristics above or by some other hitherto unmentioned set of characteristics.

Nevertheless, I suggest that we resist this way of thinking. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully argue this point, except to say the following. To think in this way implies that the “essence” of philosophy is definable in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, for it assumes that a specific set of characteristics is all that is required to determine whether a particular text is philosophy.

But I think that it is unlikely that philosophy can be adequately defined in this way. As we have seen, philosophy can be described along several main categories: its subject matter, origins, aims, and methods. Within each category, we can mention a number of characteristics. But again neither these categories nor characteristics should be construed as exhaustive, for there is much more that can be said for each. For example, regarding main categories, we might include the practical consequences of philosophy, that is, we might say that philosophy is a pleasurable intellectual exercise done for its own sake²⁶ or that it helps us navigate through life more effectively and efficiently.²⁷ Regarding characteristics, we might say that philosophy aims at a theory of life²⁸ or that it examines the actions of people within context of the concrete situations in which they live²⁹ or that it examines the ideas of people understood within the context of their lived experience.³⁰ We might also say that philosophy aims at some kind of knowledge of the world so that we can understand the social circumstances in which we live and thereby change them for the better.³¹ Additionally, we might say that philosophy involves imagination, curiosity, openness, vision, and passion.³² Thus, we can go on indefinitely about the dynamic and expansive nature of philosophy, and, if so, it seems unlikely that we can adequately define it by a static and finite concept.

We might attempt to address this problem by constructing a very comprehensive and detailed definition, one that does well to characterize various important features of philosophy.³³ Such a definition might be helpful and even illuminating but it is unlikely to be adequate, for it would also have to state necessary and sufficient conditions for each of the main concepts used to characterize philosophy. That is, we would also have to state necessary and sufficient conditions for, say, “wonder” or “reflection,” which surely would have to be somehow included in any comprehensive definition of philosophy. This is because if necessary and sufficient conditions are required to define philosophy, then I don’t see why we should not require the same for the concepts used in that definition. If this were not required for these concepts, then it would seem arbitrary to require such conditions for philosophy. Therefore, consistency would require that the essentialist demand necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts like “wonder” and “reflection,” but it seems unlikely that we can adequately define these concepts, for they seem as difficult to define as “imagination” and “creativity.”

Thus, it is unlikely that we can adequately give necessary and sufficient conditions for philosophy, for it seems that we could indefinitely describe the nature of philosophy and, moreover, indefinitely describe the concepts used in that definition. If we attempted such a definition, then we could at best understand it to be a characterization of philosophy and one that does not fully capture all that philosophy is or could be.

Given this, I also suggest that it is more likely that philosophy is a concept without a distinct boundary, if we construe it as having a boundary at all; the challenge now is to understand philosophy in this way while also understanding it as distinguishable from non-philosophy. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully address this challenge, except to say the following

I think it would be helpful to view philosophy in a way similar to Wittgenstein’s “family resemblance” view of language. According to Wittgenstein, there are no necessary and sufficient conditions that make language what it is, and, therefore, no one set of properties that constitute the “essence” of language. To explain this, he draws an analogy to the various kinds of games we play: board games, card games, ball games, and so on. Wittgenstein then asks us to “look and see” that there is no one thing that all games have in common; instead, we see that games bear various similarities and dissimilarities to one another (PI, 66). Some games have winners; others do not; some games involve accumulating points; others do not, and so on.

For Wittgenstein, instead of seeing one thing that all games have in common, what we see is a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail” (PI, 66). It is therefore best to see games as bearing a “family resemblance” to each other: games share a variety of resemblances in a variety of ways with no one thing common to them all (PI, 67). For Wittgenstein, this suggests that natural language is a concept with blurred edges and no definite boundary (PI, 71). Just like the games we play, language is a set of inter-related “language-games” with no one thing that all “language-games” have in common (PI, 69-71). There is also no sharp boundary between language and non-language. As Wittgenstein says, “you could draw a boundary, but you can’t give the boundary,” because no such boundary exists (PI, 68). Nevertheless, the concept of language still has meaning and use despite the fact that we can’t state necessary and sufficient conditions for it. And just as there may be no end to the various games we can play, there is no end to the various kinds of language-games we can construct.

To my knowledge, Wittgenstein nowhere extends this view to philosophy, but it seems that doing so would be an acceptable application of his view.³⁴ If we make this application, then we obtain a view of philosophy that is more plausible than viewing it in the essentialist way described above and one that nonetheless enables us to view philosophy as distinguishable from non-philosophy. On a family resemblance view of philosophy, there is no one property or set of properties that makes philosophy what it is, and, therefore, no one thing that separates philosophy from non-philosophy. Instead, what we see is a family of various ways of doing philosophy that bear similarities to each other in various ways, with no one thing common to them all. And there is no sharp boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy; if we speak of a boundary at all, then it is fuzzy, permeable, and perhaps shifts over time.

Of course, we could draw a boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy, but we can’t give the boundary. Nevertheless, our concept of philosophy still has meaning and use despite the fact that we cannot state its necessary and

sufficient conditions, for we are still able to distinguish clear cases of philosophy (e.g., Plato's Republic) from clear cases of non-philosophy (e.g., the National Enquirer). Although there might be cases that fall into the blurry area between philosophy and non-philosophy, they would not pose a problem for this view, for it accepts that there are closer or further similarities to a family of characteristics that we recognize as philosophy. Thus, there might be cases where a text bears a slight resemblance to some characteristics we associate with philosophy without it being clear as to how or to what degree this resemblance occurs. Seen from the prism of this "family resemblance" view, it might have at first seemed that the Nahuatl texts exhibited characteristics that only slightly resembled those that we associate with philosophy, but upon closer examination the texts bear a much stronger resemblance that places them well within the domain of philosophy.

It is important to note that my argument for the claim that the Nahuas did philosophy does not depend on accepting this "family resemblance" view, for one could give the consistency argument I gave above without holding this view. Nevertheless, I think it can provide a plausible theoretical basis for my argument, and one that is helpful in advancing a better understanding of philosophy and its distinction from non-philosophy.

Conclusion

At any rate, I hope this discussion shows that, despite the inadequacy of León-Portilla's argument, it is still plausible to think that the Nahuas did philosophy: the Nahuatl texts exhibit many characteristics that we philosophers use to describe genuine philosophical thinking, and, on those grounds, consistency requires that we consider them as philosophy and their writers as having done philosophy. At least, I hope to have shown that it is far from obvious that we should exclude them from the domain of genuine philosophizing. It is unlikely that philosophy is the kind of thing that has a distinct boundary because it is unlikely that one set of characteristics can serve as criteria for inclusion into its domain. Thus, it is more likely that philosophy has no distinct boundary. I have offered a family resemblance view to explain how we could understand philosophy in this way and yet distinguish it from non-philosophy, but much more work is needed to fully justify this view. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown that we should philosophically examine the Nahuatl texts and likewise engage their authors, rather than exclude them because they don't fit neatly into some rigid conception of what philosophy is.³⁵

Endnotes

1. Miguel León-Portilla. *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind [Aztec Thought and Culture]* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 3-24. Who were the Aztecs? The name "Aztecs" refers to a native group who called themselves the "Mexica." This group migrated from its origins probably in northwestern Mexico to what is now the Valley of Mexico. The Mexica established their capital, Tenochtitlan, on a marshy island off the western shore of Lake Texcoco. From it, they built an empire that stretched from what is now the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. The Mexica, however, were not the only native group in the Valley of Mexico. There were many others: Tetzocans, Acolhua, Tlaxcatecs, Cholulans, Chalcan, to name a few. These groups shared a common language, Nahuatl, which is a member of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family and related to the Ute, Hopi, and Comanche languages. They also shared strong cultural influences from the earlier Tolttec and Teotihuacan civilizations (Richard F. Townsend, *The Aztecs* [London: Thames & Hudson, 2000], 44-53). This larger group is called the Nahuas, and it is this broader population—with the Mexica as its most dominant group—that is the focus of my study. So instead of using the name "Aztecs," I will use "Nahuas."

2. Thus, I am not asking here whether or not the Nahuas had a philosophy: that question has already been answered affirmatively by ample textual evidence from which we can piece together an interpretation of their philosophy. Instead, I am asking whether or not that Nahuas explicitly did philosophy, as, say, the Pre-Socratics explicitly did philosophy. This is an important question, for it is certainly possible that the Nahuas could have a philosophy without doing it in this explicit way.
3. One obvious pre-conception has to do with the relationship between poetry and philosophy. In the *Ion* and *Republic*, Plato argues that the poets say many fine things, but these sayings are more the product of a kind of inspiration, not knowledge (*Ion* 534b - c, 536c - d). Poetry is an imitative skill, and poets often have little, if any, understanding of what they say (*R.* X 602b). Wisdom and understanding, however, is the aim and task of philosophers and philosophy (*R.* V 475b, VI 511c - d). Poets are therefore not philosophers and poetry is not philosophy.
It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into this controversy, except to note that philosophy and poetry can overlap. Obvious examples can be seen in Parmenides and Lucretius, who blend philosophical content with poetic verse. In this essay, I would like to set aside this issue in order to focus on our preconceptions on what characteristics, if any, constitute the boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy.
4. Duchamp's Fountain is a common urinal displayed as a work of art.
5. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, xxiii.
6. *Ibid.*, 3-4
7. *Ibid.*, 4-7 for texts 1-6. For all these texts, León-Portilla notes the following: "Coleccion de Canatares Mexicanos [Cantares Mexicanos] (ed. by Antonio Peñafiel), fol. 2, v. The original manuscript of this work is found in the National Library of Mexico."
8. This text seems to express an insight similar (but not identical) to the one Aristotle expresses in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1094a20 - 23): "...we do not choose everything because of something else—for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile." Here, Aristotle argues that there must be a highest good that is the ultimate end for all our desires; without this ultimate end, desire is empty and futile. The similarity between text 1 and Aristotle's view has to do with the nature of desire rather than the nature of the good. Both seem to agree that desire without an ultimate end is empty and futile. There are differences, however: text 1 seems to question whether there is an ultimate end to desire and whether such an end could be discovered; Aristotle thinks there must be such an end, and that it can be discovered. Indeed, Aristotle later settles on an answer: the ultimate end of human desire is happiness (*NE* 1097b22 - 24).
9. León-Portilla notes: "The term Ximoayan, 'the abode of the defleshed ones,' was one of the Nahuatl expressions for the hereafter" (*Aztec Thought and Culture*, 6).
10. Regarding the word "truth," León-Portilla states:
The word "truth" in Nahuatl, *neltiliztli*, is derived from the same radical as "root," *tla-nél-huatl*, from which, in turn, comes *nel-huáyotl*, "base" or "foundation." The stem syllable *nel* has the original connotation of solid firmness or deeply rooted. With this etymology "truth," for the Nahuas, was to be identified with well-grounded stability. (*Aztec Thought and Culture*, 8)
11. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 6
12. *Ibid.*, 8
13. *Ibid.*, 8-9
14. More specifically, one might question the extent to which the texts were corrupted by the Indian informants from whom these texts were secured. As León-Portilla notes,

contamination may have occurred in a variety of ways, some of which are as follows (Miguel León-Portilla, "Have We Really Translated the Mesoamerican 'Ancient Word?'" ["Translated?"] in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, edited by Brian Swann (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1992), 314-15). First, the original meaning of the content of oral tradition may have been lost simply by the act of writing. As León-Portilla says, "Orality, open always to enrichment and adaptations within changing circumstances, cannot be incarcerated, reduced to linear alphabetic writing, transformed into something totally alien to the native culture" ("Translated?" 315). Second, contamination may have occurred due to self-censure: the Nahuatl informant may have provided answers that he thought would have pleased his interrogator, or he may have concealed information that he thought to be most sacred. Third, the Nahuatl informant may have answered a question to fit what his interrogator was looking for, so contamination may have occurred by emphasis. Fourth, the native informant may also have misunderstood the question that was asked and thereby provided the wrong answer.

15. Walter Mignolo notes some of the ways in which this objection has been raised (Walter Mignolo, "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference," in *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, edited by Eduardo Mendieta [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003], 80). According to Mignolo, some regarded the application of the term "philosophy" to the Nahuatl texts as "imprudent." The Nahuas may not have done anything resembling philosophical discourse; instead, they simply may have been doing something entirely different. This need not be construed as a "lack" but simply a difference. Just as the Nahuas may have "lacked" philosophy, they may have been doing something that the Europeans "lacked."

16. Regarding the first set of objections, León-Portilla argues that we can be confident that we have translated at least part of the Mesoamerican 'Ancient word' ("Translated?" 313-38). To begin with, the ancient Mesoamericans had an oral tradition that was formally taught but was used in conjunction with written codices so that the oral teachings enable the student to "follow" the pictorial representations in the codices. The native Mesoamericans thus used books, and they had a deep appreciation for them, which is exemplified by texts expressing reverence for wise men, "to whom the books belong." Moreover, there are texts that read as though the writer is taking dictation from someone who is "reading" a codex. For example, the text of the Legend of the Suns strongly suggests that the speaker is referring to a codex, for the speaker says things like, "Here is . . .," "There is . . .," and "of this, his appearance is here." Lastly, there exist several copies of the same transliterated indigenous text, copies that were independently collected and could be demonstrated to have its source in an indigenous codex.

Regarding the second objection, León-Portilla argues that the term "philosophy" can be applied to Nahuatl thought provided that we properly understand its application (Miguel León-Portilla, "Pre-Hispanic Thought," in *Major Trends in Mexican Philosophy*, by Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: Consejo Técnico de Humanidades [Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1966], 6-11). According to León-Portilla, when investigators of Nahuatl culture apply the term "philosophy" to Nahuatl thought, they are in no way describing Nahuatl thought in itself, for they cannot escape the conceptual machinery that they bring to the investigation. Instead, they apply this term to their own historical invention of Nahuatl thought, which results from the process of working to understand Nahuatl thought in its own proper context and then determining whether the concept of philosophy applies. When doing this, investigators might extend the original connotation of the term "philosophy" and thereby widen its applicability; however, they apply the term only when features in their reconstruction of Nahuatl thought are found to be analogous to those which are found in the concept of philosophy. In this way, investigators can make

Nahuatl thought comprehensible to themselves yet maintain an awareness of the real epistemological limitations of their investigation.

17. A few important remarks about this catalogue are in order: First, this catalogue was compiled from a sampling of views expressed by a variety of philosophers. This sampling is intended to list fairly common ways in which philosophers describe their discipline. It is not intended to be a definition, nor is it intended to present these characteristics as "essential" properties of philosophy. Second, this sampling of descriptors is intended to be substantial, but it is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. For example, a more comprehensive and exhaustive list would include critical post-modernist perspectives. It would also include South and East Asian perspectives, as well as African American, African, and Middle Eastern perspectives. Moreover, it would include the views of those who argue that genuine philosophy must be a priori, necessary, or non-scientific. Third, the main categories, including their various characteristics, need not be construed as mutually exclusive or all-compatible. Fourth, all of these characteristics should be understood to have very broad meanings, so that they generally describe the similarities of what philosophers say about philosophy, but leave out the specific meanings that each philosopher had in mind. For example, Aristotle, Russell, and Burkhardt all think that philosophy aims at knowledge (7), but there are differences in the conception of knowledge that each has in mind.

18. (1) Jorge J.E. Gracia. "The History of Philosophy and Latin American Philosophy" ["History of Philosophy"], in *The Role of History in Latin American Philosophy: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Arleen Salles and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 23; Robert C. Solomon. *The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy* [Big Questions] (Toronto: Thompson Wadsworth, 2006), 7; Risiri Frondizi. "Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?" In *Latin American Philosophy: An Introduction with Readings*, edited by Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2004), 294; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 3-4; Jean Grimshaw, *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 22-23.

19. (2) Plato, *Apology* 38a, *Republic* I 344e; Brian Yazzie Burkhardt. "What Coyote and Thales can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology." In *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 17.

20. (3) Plato, *Theatetus* 155d; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 982b13-15; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 3-4.

(4) Solomon, *Big Questions*, 5-6; Simon Blackburn. *Think* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4-5; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 3-4.

(5) John Dewey. *Reconstruction in Philosophy* [Reconstruction] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), 7-11; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 3-4.

21. (6) Plato, *Republic* V 475b, 480a; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 981b30.

(7) Aristotle, *Metaphysics* II 993b20; Bertrand Russell. *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), 154-55; Jaques Maritain. *An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. E.I. Watkin (London: Sheed & Ward, 1933), 108; Laurence Bonjour and Ann Baker. *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology* [Philosophical Problems] (New York: Pearson, 2006), 1; Brian Yazzie Burkhardt. "What Coyote and Thales can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology." In *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 17.

(8) Wilfrid Sellars. *Science, Perception and Reality* [Science] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 1; Gracia, "History of Philosophy," 23; J.C.C Smart. *Philosophy and*

Scientific Realism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 1-2; Andrea Nye. "It's Not Philosophy." In *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*, edited by Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 104.

(9) C.S. Peirce. "The Fixation of Belief." In *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 10; Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 47 (PI 109), 50 (PI 125), and 51 (PI 133); Rudolf Carnap. "Philosophy and Logical Syntax." In *What is Philosophy?* edited by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 46-48, 51-52, 54-56; Max Black. "Linguistic Method in Philosophy" ["Linguistic Method"]. In *What is Philosophy?* edited by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 66-67.

(10) Manuel Velasquez. *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 10th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 4.

22. (11) Elliott Sober. *Core Questions in Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 4th ed. [Core Questions] (New Jersey: Pearson 2005), 4; Gary E. Kessler. *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 6th ed. (Belmont: Thompson, 2007), 4.

(12) Sober; *Core Questions*, 4; Grimshaw, *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking*, 30, 32-33.

(13) Solomon, *Big Questions*, 6; BonJour and Baker; *Philosophical Problems*, 8-9.

(14) *Ibid.*, 9-11.

(15) Bertrand Russell. "On Scientific Method in Philosophy." In *What is Philosophy?* edited by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 40; Solomon, *Big Questions*, 6.

(16) Black, "Linguistic Method," 66-67; Dewey, *Reconstruction*, 23; BonJour and Baker; *Philosophical Problems*, 2; Solomon, *Big Questions*, 6; Sober; *Core Questions*, 4-5.

(17) Solomon, *Big Questions*, 6; "gathering together different ideas into a single, unified vision."

23. Here, one could raise problems with the accuracy of León-Portilla's translations, but for the purpose of this paper, I will leave these problems to the translators.

24. One might ask here: Did the Nahuas aim for wisdom (5)? Texts 1-6 do not provide evidence for this, but elsewhere León-Portilla argues that there were indeed Nahuatl wise men, or *tlamatini*. According to León-Portilla, *tlamatini* is best translated as "he who knows things" or "he who knows something" (*Aztec Thought and Culture*, 11). To give his argument, León-Portilla cites another text that gives an elaborate description of the Nahuatl wise man. This description, which is too long to quote here, defines the wise man as "a light, a torch...the path, the true way for others." The wise man possesses "...the handed-down wisdom; he teaches it; he follows the path of truth." He is a "[t]eacher of truth, he never ceases to admonish." We are told that "[e]veryone is comforted by him, corrected, and taught. Thanks to him people humanize their will and receive a strict education" (León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 10). Thus, despite the fact that texts 1-6 do not show that the Nahuas aimed at wisdom, there is other evidence that the Nahuas aimed at what could be construed as wisdom.

25. One place where, broadly speaking, this objection is addressed is in the fall 2001 issue of the APA Newsletters (vol. 1, no. 1). More specifically, see Anne Waters, "Broadening the Scope of American Philosophy at the Turn of a New Millennium"; V.F. Cordova, "What is Philosophy?"; Robert C. Solomon, "What is Philosophy? The Status of Non-Western Philosophy in the Profession"; Joseph Prabhu, "Philosophy in an Age of Global Encounter"; Yoko Arisaka, "Reflections on 'What is Philosophy? The Status of Non-Western Philosophy in the Profession'; Pieter Duvenage, "Is There a South African Philosophical Tradition?"; and Jay M. Van Hook, "The Universalist Thesis Revisited: What Direction for African Philosophy in the New Millennium?" For other interesting

work on academic philosophy, see also Tracy Bowell, "Fitting In? Negotiating Our Places in the Profession" and Nancy J. Holland, "Philosophy and the Future of Women's Studies."

26. Blackburn, *Think*, 6.

27. Blackburn, *Think*, 6-7; Sellars, *Science*, 1-2.

28. José Ortega y Gasset. *What is Philosophy?* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1960), 240.

29. Vine Deloria, Jr. "Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples." In *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 11.

30. V.F. Cordova. "Approaches to Native American Philosophy." In *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 27.

31. Maurice Cornforth. *Science Versus Idealism: A Defense of Philosophy against Positivism and Pragmatism* (New York: International Publishers, 1962), 223.

32. Robert C. Solomon. *The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin Versus the Passionate Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), vi, 3, 5, 7, 9.

33. Gracia gives perhaps the most comprehensive definition of philosophy that I have yet come across. He does so in three points.

The first is that the aim of philosophy is to develop a view of the world, or any of its parts, which seeks to be accurate, consistent, comprehensive, and supported by sound evidence. As such, philosophy can be distinguished from other disciplines of learning in two ways: (1) It is more general insofar as all other disciplines of learning are concerned with restricted areas of knowledge involving specific methodologies, particular objects or kinds of objects, or both; and (2) it involves areas of investigation that are uniquely philosophical such as ethics, logic, and metaphysics. The second point is that philosophy concerns the solution of philosophical problems, that is, of problems that surface precisely when one tries to achieve the aim just stated, either because of conceptual inconsistencies, empirical evidence, or inadequacies of other sorts. Finally, philosophy is not merely a descriptive enterprise; it also involves interpretation and evaluation. To proceed philosophically, then, is to proceed so as to achieve the aims of the discipline; and to proceed nonphilosophically is precisely to proceed in ways that divert oneself from those aims. ("History of Philosophy," 23)

34. This view has been used to help clarify other thorny issues in Latin American thought. For example, Gracia has used it to help clarify our understanding of Hispanic/Latino identity (Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* [Great Britain: Blackwell, 2000], 44-69).

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The Legacy of Humboldt, Krause, and Nietzsche in Latin America: Three Brief Accounts

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The following three essays evolved from a special session on "German Philosophy in the Americas" that was part of the Central Division Meeting of The American Philosophical Association that was held in Chicago in 2008. The idea behind the session was to attract attention to Latin American philosophy by highlighting the interesting ways in which the German and Latin American philosophical traditions have influenced each other. Despite the fact that three distinct German thinkers from three distinct periods were discussed during the panel session, each with unique intellectual projects, there is a common strand that connects the influence that the work of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), K.C.F. Krause (1781-1832), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) had in Latin America. The work of each of these thinkers found a warm reception in Latin America in part because central to each thinker's work was a concern for freedom and social reform.

Alexander von Humboldt's legacy in America is presented by way of an investigation of his famous American Voyage (1799-1801) or travels to the equinoctial regions of the earth. During this voyage, Humboldt not only collected important plant, animal, and mineral samples for further study, he also made careful observation of the cultures that he encountered in Spanish America, preparing political essays that reflected an open, appreciative attitude for the people and culture of America. Humboldt was one of the first Europeans to express respect for the cultures of Latin America, hence it is no surprise that he became a widely admired figure by thinkers such as Simón Bolívar and F.D. Sarmiento, the very thinkers who fought for freedom and political change early in America's struggle for independence from Spain.

The essay by Claus Dierksmeier, “From Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832) to Krausismo” takes the reader through the various stages of Krause’s influence in the Spanish-speaking world, with special emphasis on the reception of his work in Argentina and Uruguay. Dierksmeier highlights the social and political aspects of Krause’s work and influence, emphasizing the harmonic freedom that underlies the peaceful change advocated by Krause and his followers in the Spanish-speaking world. The piece ends with the following claim: “to follow Krause means, above all, one thing: freedom is not only the prime end but also the premier means of all philosophical and political efforts.” The themes of reform and liberation that Dierksmeier stresses in his account of Krause’s influence in America are themes that shape many of the most important streams of Latin American philosophy.

Finally, Omar Rivera, in “From Revolving Time to the Time of Revolution: Mariátegui’s Encounter with Nietzsche,” gives a detailed account of Nietzsche’s influence on the “first Latin American Marxist.” Rivera opens his piece with the question that frames his discussion, namely: what is the extent of Nietzsche’s influence on Mariátegui? To answer this question, Rivera carefully unpacks the elements of Mariátegui’s aesthetic state of liberation and how the aesthetic state of liberation is constituted. He shows that the connection between aesthetics and politics that Nietzsche pursued is one that Mariátegui not only took seriously, but one that informed his own, unique aesthetic project.

While each paper addresses the influence of a particular German thinker on the Latin American tradition, we should not overlook the fact that as the German tradition influenced Latin American thought, German thought in turn was transformed in Latin America, attesting to the influence of Latin American thought in German-speaking lands too. While not always fully acknowledged, there was a flow of exchange between the philosophical traditions of Europe and the Americas.

Humboldt’s American Legacy

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Humboldt is a figure whose name appears in all corners of the Americas, from Caracas to Chicago. His grand American voyage of 1799-1804 left its mark in all of the countries he visited, as he collected specimens, scaled and measured mountains, and observed the landscape and the effects of landscape upon the diverse cultures he encountered in Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba, the United States, and other territories of the so-called New World. Even Chicago has its tribute to Humboldt in a park named after him. Yet, not much is known in the English-speaking world about Humboldt’s work. Even in Germany, Alexander von Humboldt’s work is not as well known as that of his brother’s, Wilhelm, with whom he is often confused (they did grow up like twins, as we are told in many biographies). Recent work by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and the success of Daniel Kehlmann’s novel, *Die Vermessung der Welt* (a somewhat superficial parallel fictional-historical account of the lives of Humboldt and the mathematician Karl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855)) has helped to bring more much-deserved attention to Humboldt and his work.

In contrast to the situation in the United States and Germany, in Latin America Alexander von Humboldt is almost a household name. Part of what made Humboldt such a beloved figure in Spanish America was his appreciation of the cultures he observed there: rather than judging all that he found in

America with a European lens, as most of his contemporaries did, Humboldt attempted to understand the people and cultures he encountered during his voyage on their own terms. His political essays on the island of Cuba and on New Spain incorporate his fastidious empirical work with a clear vision of how the landscape of a given territory affects the culture of the people of that territory. The aesthetics of appreciation was never far from Humboldt’s work. And most scrupulously, Humboldt strove to make science accessible to the public. Indeed *Cosmos* became the first scientific best-seller of the nineteenth century. Certainly, Humboldt did not suffer from the dubious knack Goethe ascribed to the Germans, namely, that of making science inaccessible to the public. In my estimation, Humboldt’s aesthetics of appreciation was a crucial aspect of his warm reception in Spanish America, and his aesthetics of appreciation had its roots in a specific intellectual movement, that of early German Romanticism.

1. What Makes Humboldt a Romantic? Dispelling Some Myths

In a curious German text from 1796, an impassioned plea (not unrelated to a certain revolutionary enthusiasm that marked this period of German thought) was made to unite science and poetry. The text’s title, *The Earliest Program for a System of German Idealism*, is misleading, for the text does not really set out to deploy German Idealism, but it rather calls, in piecemeal fashion, for a move away from mechanistic models of understanding natural and social reality—invoking a new mythology that will join science and art, lawfulness and freedom.¹ According to the text, “the highest act of reason is an aesthetic act,” and so “the philosopher must possess as much aesthetic power as the poet.”² Those individuals lacking in aesthetic sense will remain limited beings, “in the dark when it comes to anything beyond graphs and charts.”³ In other words, those people who do not know how to handle ideas will be limited to the mechanistic realm of the quantifiable. With its focus on the intimate relation between poetry and philosophy, and the move to provide culture with an aesthetic point of orientation, this short, pithy piece can be read as a kind of romantic manifesto.

It would seem, at first glance, that no reputable scientist would want to be associated with the goals of such a manifesto, for scientists strive to orient culture via laws of nature, and laws are subject to strict rules, and put together into theories (not myths) supported by the data of those despised “graphs and charts” to which the author of the text makes reference. In contrast, art is the product of freedom and comes into being precisely as it moves beyond established laws, beyond the quantifiable—one does not measure beauty; one appreciates it. What connection could there be between a call to move beyond the “charts and graphs” of the empirical scientists and the serious work of a scientist such as Alexander von Humboldt?⁴

The best way to explain this connection is to explore the link between Humboldt’s work and a philosophical movement that highlighted the aesthetic and historical dimensions of reality. I refer to early German Romanticism, a movement that flourished in Jena and Berlin between the years of 1794 and 1808, which included thinkers such as the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), Friedrich Schlegel, Dorothea Mendelssohn Schlegel, and Caroline Schlegel Schelling. The romantic connection that I shall explore will shed light on the roots of Humboldt’s open, appreciative attitude towards the cultures he encountered in Spanish America.

In Latin America there is a long tradition of taking Humboldt seriously, not only as a scientist but as a humanist whose vast

knowledge of the region helped to promote progress there and also led to a more enlightened image of Latin America in Europe. As a result of Humboldt's serious engagement with the land, people, and political structures of Latin America, he has been heralded by intellectuals there as the first great thinker of modernity, a father of the independence movements, and (somewhat problematically) as the "scientific discoverer" of America.⁵ Authors as diverse as D.F. Sarmiento (in *Facundo* of 1845) and Eduardo Galeano (in *Open Veins of Latin America* of 1973) each cite Humboldt as an expert on matters pertaining to the region.⁶

Humboldt's long relation with Latin America began when he and his traveling companion, the French botanist, Aimé Bonpland were given permission by the Spanish Crown to explore the Spanish colonies of the New World. On June 5, 1799, they sailed from Spain in a ship called the *Pizarro*, stopped off at the Canary Islands, and arrived in Cumaná, Venezuela, on July 16, 1799.⁷ They explored the coast and then penetrated inland, to the Orinoco and Rio Negro rivers, collecting data as they went. In Caracas, Humboldt met with individuals who would prove to be critical political and intellectual figures of the period, such as Andrés Bello and Simón Bolívar. Humboldt and Bonpland's travels took them to Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and to the United States (where Humboldt met Thomas Jefferson and began a lifelong friendship with him). They returned to Europe (Bordeaux) on August 3, 1804, and Humboldt began work on his narrative of the five-year voyage to the equinoctial regions of the earth, a project that was to consume his time and his finances for most of the rest of his life. The published work consisted of thirty folio volumes, with the last volume published in 1834.⁸

Humboldt was widely admired by influential figures of Latin America during his own lifetime. As early as 1815, Simón Bolívar praised Humboldt's "encyclopedic theoretical and practical knowledge" of Venezuela (in his *Carta de Jamaica*).⁹ Long after Humboldt's death, this admiration is still very much alive. Recently, the prominent Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea contrasted Humboldt's views of the inhabitants of the Spanish colonies to those of his contemporaries. Zea uses these contrasts to convincingly show that Humboldt, unlike other prominent European thinkers of the period, such as Cornelius de Pauw or Comte de Buffon (the first of the anti-Americans), was able to overcome a view of non-Europeans as necessarily inferior. Zea argues that in overcoming racially hierarchical views, Humboldt was able to arrive at an appreciation of diversity that was ahead of its time. Humboldt's open, accepting attitude towards the cultures and peoples he encountered in the New World was the result of what Zea calls a "romantic attitude":

Humboldt was one of those to whom Hegel referred when he spoke of those who were fed up, tired of the historical museum that Europe had become. For precisely this reason, Humboldt is a Romantic.¹⁰

To call Humboldt a Romantic merely because of his being "fed up" with Europe is to do a disservice both to Humboldt's innovative scientific approach and to early German Romanticism. I agree with Zea that Humboldt is a Romantic (and he most certainly would have been not only bored, but angered by views typical of many Europeans of the period), but I shall show that he is a Romantic for reasons far deeper than any ennui he may have had with the historical museum that Europe had (or had not) become.

In what follows I shall argue that Humboldt is a Romantic because of the particular way in which he approached his understanding of all living forces, human as well as plants, nations as well as individuals.¹¹ Humboldt privileged the living

changing elements of nature and the method he developed to capture nature in its change, was one that involved moving "beyond charts and graphs," that is, beyond the merely quantifiable aspects of nature. The scientific method of Humboldt included an aesthetic-historical approach to the phenomena of nature. I shall make the case that precisely these aspects of Alexander von Humboldt's work make him and his approach "romantic."¹² My interest in bringing to light Humboldt's connections to early German Romanticism stems from my conviction that it is precisely the romantic aspect of his thought that paved the way for his open, appreciative attitude toward the cultures he encountered in America, a land described by most of his contemporaries as a degenerate, sinister place, nothing more than a natural and cultural wasteland.

2 Humboldt and the Break from Eurocentrism

Humboldt certainly did not see America as any sort of wasteland. He spent an important portion of his life in the New World collecting data and plant and mineral samples to send back to Europe for further investigation, and he was impressed with the wealth of biodiversity he encountered there. Yet, it is critical to keep in mind that his conception of his work's importance was not limited to helping the cause of science understood as the mere amassing of data, but always also included the cause of human organization and progress. Unfortunately, Humboldt's dedication to the alleviation of conditions which gave rise to social inequalities has been overlooked by some contemporary scholars. Consider, for example, the claim made by Mary Louise Pratt: "Humboldt's eye depopulates and dehistoricizes the American landscape even as it celebrates its grandeur and variety."¹³

Humboldt did indeed celebrate the grandeur and variety of the American landscape, yet it is simply false to claim that his eye depopulated and dehistoricized that landscape. In his hallmark work on America, *Voyages aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent*, Humboldt was primarily interested in providing an account of nature, yet never without concern for those who lived amidst the scenes he was describing. In his *Essai sur la géographie des plantes*, Humboldt explores the issue of how the appearance of nature affects the customs and sensibility of the people of a given region. This text provides abundant counterexamples to Pratt's claim that Humboldt's eye depopulates landscapes. Moreover, in his political essays, concern for human political structures and the inequalities suffered by the Americans under colonial rule are the central issues. In his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, he described Mexico quite trenchantly (and not without risk of punishment from the Spanish Crown) as "the land of inequality."

There is no hint in any of Humboldt's work that he wants to "dehistoricize" anything. Quite the contrary, Humboldt incorporated history into his scientific approach in a comparative way that allowed him to free his observations of the cultural (and racial) bigotry that plagued the work of most of his contemporaries. In the *Political Essay*, rather than subsume all he finds in the New World to what he already knows, for example, the Indigenous "barbaric" ways under the European "civilized" ways, that is, rather than using the term "European" as the universal standard by which to measure the degree of civilization that the American cultures possessed, Humboldt compared the American and European cultures, without appealing to European culture as the standard. He looked critically at both Europe and America. For example, Humboldt argues that in order to judge the worth of the Indigenous cultures of New Spain (or Mexico, as the region came to be known after the colonial period), we must first make a proper comparison:

How shall we judge, from these miserable remains of a powerful people, of the degree of cultivation to which it had risen from the twelfth to the sixteenth century and of the intellectual development of which it is susceptible? If all that remained of the French or German nation were a few poor agriculturists, could we read in their features that they belonged to nations which had produced a Descartes and Clariaut, a Kepler and a Leibniz?¹⁴

Humboldt was well aware that in order to understand the Indigenous cultures and to judge their merits, present quantifiable data was not enough, we must be presented with a proper sampling of evidence of their past achievements. A proper sampling to make a comparison with European intellectual culture would have to include the work of some of the leading intellectuals and scientists of the pre-colonial era, yet as most of the remains of the Indigenous culture have been destroyed, it is hasty for the Europeans to assume that there were no intellectual figures or scientists of note. Furthermore, the Indigenous people who survived the colonization have been oppressed, their character has been changed. Humboldt writes:

As to the moral faculties of the Indians, it is difficult to appreciate them with justice if we only consider this long oppressed caste in their present state of degradation. The better sort of Indians, among whom a certain degree of intellectual culture might be supposed, perished in great part at the commencement of the Spanish conquest, the victims of European ferocity. ...All those who inhabited the teocalli or houses of God, who might be considered the depositories of the historical, mythological and astronomical knowledge of the country were exterminated. The monks burned the hieroglyphic paintings by which every kind of knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation. The people, deprived of these means of instruction, were plunged in an ignorance so much the deeper as the missionaries were unskilled in the Mexican languages and could substitute few new ideas in the place of the old.¹⁵

Humboldt was not willing to simply assume the superiority of the European culture based on a comparison with the scant historical evidence of the contributions of the Aztec civilization left in the wake of the devastation caused by the Spanish conquistadores. He was, moreover, acutely aware of the problems left in the wake of uprooting a civilization from their traditions. The charts and graphs drawn by most scientists looking at the Indigenous cultures were not prepared with sufficient attention to the historical factors which may have accounted for the Indigenous inhabitants seeming to be behind the Europeans in terms of intellectual contributions. Humboldt emphasizes the need to look beyond present empirical evidence to the historical circumstances that give rise to present data: if the leading intellectuals of a group are killed off, their scholarly contributions destroyed, with no teachers available to pass on knowledge, certainly it is unjust to conclude that the group is inferior. At most they are uneducated, and as Humboldt indicates, the blame for the lack of education in New Spain fell squarely on the Spaniards, not on the native Americans.

In our multicultural times, it seems a matter of course that a scientist, be she a natural or a social scientist, would not assume cultural superiority, yet this was not the case at the turn of the eighteenth century (and still by no means always the case even in our own times). Humboldt's attention to the history of the Indigenous cultures as a necessary condition for

making a meaningful comparison of European and American cultures is a remarkable move, for it reveals an openness to acknowledging that the cultures of a continent that had been consistently labeled by Europeans as the dwelling place of beasts and barbarians, deserved more attention than they had received: the unfamiliar was not uncritically to be associated with the inferior.

The respect Humboldt expressed for the Spanish-American region and its culture may very well have fueled the anti-colonial sentiment that was already building and which led to the independence movements of the early 1800s.¹⁶ Humboldt saw a connection between scientific study and political change:

A reforming government ought, before every other object, to set about changing the present limits of the intendancies. This political change ought to be founded on the exact knowledge of the physical state and the state of cultivation of the provinces of New Spain.¹⁷

Humboldt linked the social inequality he observed in the region of New Spain to inequalities in land distribution, and he did believe (perhaps too optimistically), that a proper understanding of the territory in terms of its dimensions, and its richness, would enable political leaders to make more informed decisions on how to divide the territories of the region and how best to use the land to improve the lives of all of the inhabitants. Humboldt did not see himself as a narrow specialist, concerned only with amassing data on, say, the mineral deposits of New Spain; he wanted his observations to be used to improve the lives of the inhabitants of the region. One central strand of Humboldt's "romantic" science is the attempt to bring distinct disciplines into conversation with one another.

Humboldt saw great potential in the relation between science and social/political issues. Pratt's (mis)reading of Humboldt as "depopulating/dehistoricizing the landscape" is symptomatic of a general misunderstanding of his intellectual project and of its place in the history of ideas. Humboldt was committed to providing a historical context for understanding nature and to discussing its impact on human beings. To "depopulate and dehistoricize" any landscape would go against the very romantic method Humboldt endorsed.

3 Humboldt's Romantic Method

Humboldt makes abundant references to tradition and history as guides for the scientist. He draws an analogy between (A) what can be accomplished with his holistic approach to nature, that is, his view that we must "recognize in the plant or the animal not merely an isolated species, but a form linked in the chain of being to other forms whether living or extinct"¹⁸ and (B) that which is accomplished with historical composition,¹⁹ that is, by placing the object of study into the historical context that will enable us to understand it:

In interrogating the history of the past, we trace the mysterious course of ideas yielding the first glimmering perception of the same image of a Cosmos, or harmoniously ordered whole, which, dimly shadowed forth to the human mind in the primitive ages of the world, is now fully revealed to the mature intellect of mankind as the result of long and laborious observation.²⁰

Humboldt held that we must have some historical orientation point in order to understand nature. Just as a complete understanding and so appreciation of Indigenous culture is impossible in the wake of the devastation of the historical records, an understanding and appreciation of nature is not possible if we dissect each part of nature and cease to see

it as a “harmoniously ordered whole.” The incorporation of historical analysis into his scientific method enables Humboldt to present nature in terms of its living, changing forces rather than as something to be interrogated as if it were a dead mass of quantifiable material. Humboldt’s approach to understanding the world around him, whether Aztec culture or Andean mountain peaks, was never one of those scientists “in the dark when it [came] to anything beyond charts and graphs.” What lies beyond the realm of the merely quantifiable? And why is it important for the scientist to go beyond this? For the merely empirical scientist, of course, nothing lies beyond the merely quantifiable, that is all we have. Yet, Humboldt was quite critical of the merely empirical approach to nature:

It is the special object of [Cosmos] to combat those errors which derive their source from a vicious empiricism and from imperfect inductions. The higher enjoyments yielded by the study of nature depend upon the correctness and the depth of our views, and upon the extent of the subjects that may be comprehended in a single glance.²¹

The “higher enjoyments” are not yielded to the scientist who looks only for quantifiable facts in nature. Our experience of beauty or the sublime puts us in touch with something “measureless to man.” Let us consider the *Ávila* in Caracas, a mountain Humboldt knew well: when we experience it as beautiful, we are taken beyond the merely physical characteristics of the mountain (its composition, its height, its location, etc.). The beautiful *Ávila* is something that cannot be measured by the scientist’s instruments, yet, only under the influence of the vicious empiricism referenced by Humboldt would a scientist discount its importance.

Humboldt’s romantic method enabled him to approach nature (in all of its living manifestations) not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Humboldt’s own description of his life’s work provides good evidence of his romantic approach:

Although the outward relations of life, and an irresistible impulse toward knowledge of various kinds, have led me to occupy myself for many years—and apparently exclusively—with separate branches of science, as, for instance, with descriptive botany, geognosy, chemistry, astronomical determinations of position, and terrestrial magnetism, in order that I might the better prepare myself for the extensive travels in which I was desirous of engaging, the actual object of my studies has nevertheless been of a higher character . . . The principal impulse by which I was directed was the earnest endeavor to comprehend the phenomena of physical objects in their general connection, and to represent nature as one great whole, moved and animated by internal forces.²²

Humboldt makes explicit reference to an underlying unity in the multiplicity of nature and the connections between his study of nature, politics, history, and the general progress of humankind. He goes on to emphasize the “mutual dependence and connection” existing between the various classes of phenomena, and speaks of “chain of connection” that links all natural forces.²³ For Humboldt, “one sole and indissoluble chain binds together all nature.”²⁴

Humboldt calls for a rational consideration of nature, that is, a nature submitted to the process of thought, finding a “unity in diversity of phenomena, a harmony blending together all created things, however dissimilar in form and attributes; one great whole, animated by the breath of life [lebendiger Hauch].”²⁵ This breath of life is something that would be suffocated by a scientific method shaped only by empirical,

quantitative methods. Wilhelm von Humboldt also emphasizes the importance of developing a method that would maintain nature’s “breath of life”:

Even a simple depiction of nature cannot be merely an enumeration and depiction of parts or the measuring of sides and angles; there is also the breath of life in the whole and an inner character which speaks through it which can be neither measured nor merely described.²⁶

A commitment to the living, changing aspects of reality informs Humboldt’s romantic method. The way in which Alexander von Humboldt’s fusion of history, aesthetics, and science was not the result of an arbitrary whim, but rather the consequence of a commitment to living nature. Humboldt was dedicated to unveiling nature to human understanding, yet did not see the unveiling process as a mere interrogation of natural phenomena so that facts could be collected and recorded. The collection and recording of facts was only part of the scientific method.

If the goal is to find a “unity in diversity of phenomena, a harmony blending together all created things . . . one great whole, animated by the breath of life,”²⁷ more than the charts and graphs of the empirical scientist are needed. The aesthetic-historical method of Humboldt’s romantic approach to nature protects the breath of life that animates the whole of nature. For Humboldt, the study of nature never amounted to merely an enumeration and depiction of parts or the measuring of sides and angles, for he was not a scientist wedded to strictly empirical methods, tied to the charts and graphs that would be suitable if nature were like a grand wind-up clock, but which were ill suited to maintain the “breath of life” animating all of nature, the living seed, the organic life forces that the romantic method was suited to capturing, however provisionally.

Conclusion

Humboldt saw the task of understanding truths about the phenomena of nature as one that will never come to an end: it is an infinite task, comprised of empirical, quantitative methods, but also, and just as importantly, of methods borrowed from art and history. Humboldt, the romantic scientist, did not find any tension between purely quantitative approaches to nature and qualitative (aesthetic-historical) ones. Humboldt’s romantic method freed science of the vicious empiricism which would petrify living organisms, and it did this by putting the charts and graphs of the scientist into dialogue with history and art, thereby introducing freedom and change into the scientific approach to nature. Humboldt’s respect for freedom and change was widespread. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that he was one of the first Europeans to respect the cultures of Latin America, and that he would be admired by the very thinkers who introduced freedom and political change into the lands of the Spanish Empire.

Endnotes

1. The misleading title was provided by Franz Rosenzweig who found and published the manuscript in 1917. The text was found in the handwriting of Hegel, yet scholars still disagree about the identity of the text’s author (Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling are each viable candidates).
2. “Earliest Program for a System of German Idealism,” in *Theory as Practice. A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, translated and edited by Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 72-73, p. 72.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
4. In his introduction to the edited collection of Humboldt’s writings, Alexander von Humboldt: *Über die Freiheit des*

Menschen (Frankfurt a. Main: Insel, 1999), Manfred Osten also makes a connection between this text and Humboldt's work in order to analyze the central role that the idea of freedom played in shaping Humboldt's thought.

5. See, for example, Leopoldo Zea, "Humboldt en la modernidad," *Cuadernos Americanos* 4, Nr. 76 (1999): 11-15; *Ibid.*, "Humboldt y el otro descubrimiento," *Cuadernos Americanos* 6, Nr. 78 (1999): 11-19.
6. Chapter 2 of *Facundo* opens with Humboldt's claim that, "Like the ocean, the Pampas fill mind with the impression of the infinite."
7. The Pizarro was supposed to dock in Havana, Cuba, but an outbreak of typhoid fever on board made it necessary to land at Cumaná.
8. *Voyages aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent, fait en 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*
9. In *Selected Writings of Simón Bolívar*, "Reply of a South American Gentleman of this Island [Jamaica]." This document is generally referred to as "La carta de Jamaica," and is one of Bolívar's earliest writings on political and international affairs. Given the general tone of disdain towards the leaders Europe, it is significant that he cites Humboldt in reporting on various statistics regarding the lands of the New World. Humboldt was generally perceived by the criollo leaders of the emerging Latin American nations as one of the few Europeans who appreciated their culture.
10. "Humboldt es uno de los hastiados de los que hablaba HEGEL, cansado del museo histórico que era ya Europa. Humboldt es por eso mismo, un romántico" ("Humboldt y el otro descubrimiento" in *Cuadernos Americanos* 6, Nr. 78 (1999): 12).
11. I borrow this way of describing Humboldt's task from an essay on history by his brother, Wilhelm von Humboldt. In *On the Historian's Task*, Wilhelm emphasizes the importance of paying due attention to all living forces: "All living forces, men as well as plants, nations as well as individuals, mankind as well as individual peoples, have in common certain qualities, kinds of development, and natural laws." In "On the Historian's Task," in *The Theory and Practice of History*: Leopold von Ranke, edited with an introduction by Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1973), 17.
12. Humboldt's connections to Romanticism are traced by Robert Richards in *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
13. "Humboldt and the Reinvention of America," p. 592 of *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, edited by René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 585-606
14. Alexander von Humboldt. *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, translated by John Black, edited by Mary Maples Dunn (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 54
15. *Ibid.*, p. 53
16. For more on this, see, Michael Zeuske, "¿Padre de la Independencia? Humboldt y la transformación a la modernidad en la América española," *Cuadernos Americanos*, 78 (1999): 20-51.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
18. Alexander von Humboldt. *Cosmos: A Sketch of the Physical Description of the Universe*, translated by E.C. Otté (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 42
19. *Ibid.*, p. 49
20. *Ibid.*, p. 24
21. *Ibid.*, p. 39
22. Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, op. cit., p. 7.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 23
24. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 24

26. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "On the Historian's Task," op. cit., p. 7.

27. Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, op. cit., p. 24

From Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832) to "Krausismo"

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The Spanish and Latin American social-democratic liberalism called Krausismo is based upon translations and adaptations of the works of the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832). For many decades neither Krause's theory nor Krausismo played much of a role in the international academic scene. Driven, however, by the democratic rejuvenation of Spain, Argentina, and Uruguay in the 1980s, interest in Krausistic liberalism rekindled. German and Latin American academics joined Spanish researchers in the 1990s, resulting in a small but vibrant global community of Krause-scholars—spearheaded by the Instituto de Investigación sobre Liberalismo, Krausismo y Masonería at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid (http://www.upco.es/centros/cent_inst_ilkm.aspx).

In the following I provide first a brief overview of some basic concepts of Krause's philosophy, then I trace their impact on Spanish and Latin American thinkers.

I. Krause's Academic Vita and Philosophy

From 1798 until 1804, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause studied and began his teaching career at the renowned German University of Jena. During this time he cooperated with Fichte, Schlegel, Schelling, and Hegel (Ureña 1991) and was extremely popular with both students and colleagues (Ureña 2001). Yet, in 1804, Krause withdrew from the academic scene. He had witnessed how Fichte and Schelling were driven out of Jena after having been charged with atheism and pantheism, respectively. As their student, Krause feared similar harassment, and chose to work out his philosophy in the peaceful anonymity of nearby Rudolstadt. Trying to stand firm by his convictions, Krause chose a highly technical language to ward off populist attacks and to reduce the risk that his works could be willfully misunderstood. Over the years he developed an ever more intricate idiom that became increasingly difficult to decode. This contributed to the curious fact that Krause's writings were much more read in translation than in the German original.

Analytic and Synthetic Philosophy

Krause aims to bring our analytic and empirical knowledge fruitfully together with our speculative and intuitive faculties (1828c, p. 30). In his mature works, he proposes the following methodology for philosophy: Whenever conceptual analysis stirs up antinomies that cannot be solved by analytic tools alone, synthetic thinking is to respond thereupon in an attempt to reconcile the heretofore incompatible concepts through integrative ideas, generated by introspective methods and conceptual constructions. The analytic part of the system is constantly adapting to the different experiences and themes that every philosophizing subject deals with respectively. Because only synthetic ideas in harmony with the analytic part can legitimately organize our knowledge, the constant changes in the analytic part drive the philosophical system to permanent internal reform (1828c, p. 276). The analytic part of Krause's philosophy is hence not merely a transitory stage

on the way to an ultimate philosophical system but serves as the actual opening where the system keeps contact with ever changing reality (1828c, p. 16). When, for instance, based on new experiences and insights, reasonable doubt arises as to the validity of certain synthetic speculations, the analytic-synthetic investigation is taken up anew. The philosophical endeavor is hence perennial; the resulting metaphysics is of transitional permanence only and remains forever open to change (Orden-Jiménez 1998a, p. 659).

Krause aims to promote only ideas that anyone willing and able, to join the conceptual work of philosophy could endorse because he holds one must make freedom both the prime content of philosophy and its principal method. Hence, his philosophy is throughout participation-oriented (employing quasi-dialogical approaches, phenomenological analyses, etc.) in order to assure the free consent of his readers and listeners (see 1828c, p. 14). Many of the astounding results which render Krause's metaphysics interesting into the present are due to this methodological openness (Dierksmeier 2004a). For the theoretical stance for everyone's free intellectual participation in philosophical endeavors is matched in Krause's practical philosophy by the idea of a universal right to participation in one's social, political, and economic environs, with special emphasis on the needs of all marginalized individuals (Dierksmeier 2003a). Those who cannot raise their own voice must be legally represented by others. Society is by default the proxy of those who cannot defend their own rights. As early as 1803, Krause applied this principle to argue for the protection of the rights of children, the emancipation of women, the human dignity of disabled persons, and the rights of future generations (1803, pp. 95-108).

Metaphysics of Humanity

The idea of humanity, comprising all persons regardless of their position in time and space, renders the highest mundane source of legitimacy of ethical and legal norms according to Krause. With legal norms their systematic validity and their historical genesis, however, often falls apart. Historically, one's gender, nationality, religion, and ethnicity may have helped establish one's rights, although, conceptually, such aspects are accidental; they do not constitute adequate philosophical reasons for the rights so conveyed. "What is law is law not because it prevails but because there is legal rationale for it. If this legal rationale is changed, [or] destroyed, so is the law" (1893, p. 111). For Krause, therefore, the source of human rights lies in the general fact that we are persons and thus particular features of one's personality must not give one legal privileges over others.

Seeing one's rights coterminus with the rights of any and all persons affects their content (Dierksmeier 2004b). When the community of all persons is the principle and the limit of all legal sovereignty, no one can legitimately claim rights that go against the rights of humanity (1904, p. 197). Hence, we must never make use of our rights in a manner that deprives others of theirs. A call for the reform of legal institutions follows suit. Wherever persons influence one another there must be laws to protect their human rights (1874, p. 350). Wherever people ought to have legal protection but lack it, the idea of human rights, reflecting back onto itself, calls for institutional change: if one has a right, one also has a right to attain this right. That is, if one is granted primary legal entitlements, then this should include secondary rights to institutions to realize such rights, and entail tertiary rights to advocate for legal reform in order to create said institutions. This "empowerment-right" aims to grant everyone "the ability to utilize his rights" (1874, pp. 260-61), providing to all the necessary conditions to realize their human rights effectively (1890a, p. 159).

A very important difference from contemporary efforts in legal theory is that Krause strongly rejects establishing basic rights based upon a symmetrical barter between rational maximizers of self-interest (1892, p. 165). Instead, he declares we must establish human rights for everyone even if that means imposing asymmetrical obligations. Thus, he embraces the notion of managing the rights of disabled or otherwise legally incapacitated individuals on their behalf.

Insofar as the individual citizen can be struck by one or more unavoidable limitations in body or mind, he may be, or become, over the course of his life, incapable of rendering some of his legal obligations. He who is born without wit, without sight, the deaf-mute, the naturally debilitated, et al., belong in this group, as well as those debilitated by sickness or mechanical damage to their body, mind, or both. Now, since [...] the owning of the entitlements to rights is in no way originally established through one's reciprocal actions, but rather through everyone's rational needs, therefore such unfortunate persons cannot [...] be deprived of their rights by their misfortune. (1890a, p. 149)

Everyone is obligated to help establish and defend the rights of all other persons. Should national law not be able to cover all forms of human contact—and Krause felt it often failed to do so—then supranational legal institutions must be created (1874, p. 539). The moral legitimacy of any particular legal entity depends on whether and how much this entity can be seen as an appropriate institution for the realization of the rights of humanity. Krause's philosophy does not limit to particular entities (such as nation states) the competence and legitimacy of creating valid societal norms. Since instead he acknowledges each and every legal structure intent and capable of realizing human rights (MacCauley 1917), Krause emphatically welcomes—much against the nationalistic sentiment of his times—transfer of national sovereignty to regional and transnational bodies and postulates global governance structures (1811, p. 60, 1920, p. 17).

Socio-economic Philosophy

The world belongs to humanity in common (1874, p. 320) and the ultimate function of legal entitlements is to enable everyone to live free (1874, p. 453). Personal liberty is, however, not identical with arbitrary choice. True liberty means living freely under laws that anyone could reasonably endorse (1828b, p. 514), which, by and large, are laws that educate and foster the very capabilities that make us human (1811, p. 183). Herein one clearly sees the Kantian legacy. Krause, however, goes further than Kant in the political application of this idea (Dierksmeier 1999).

Freedom is contingent upon conditions, some of which need to be created first. "Not only existing freedom matters, but that freedom be brought to existence, and then enhanced" (1892, p. 126). Law is for Krause therefore not (as in Kant) merely the negation of a negation of already established liberties, but rather "that everyone receive the possibility of being externally effective—in other words law has to establish the (positive and affirmative) conditions that everyone have his due sphere of external freedom, wherein necessarily lies the equitable limit of everyone else's freedom" (1892, p. 113). This is why the law not only has to ensure (negatively) that individual freedom is not infringed upon, but must also (positively) ensure that all individuals have access to the very freedoms to which they, as human beings, are entitled.

The interests of all persons (including the poor within our society, the destitute abroad, and future generations) count for Krause as an inherent corrective of any private right to property

(1874, p. 287). Crass violations of this regulative principle justify corrective measures—properly qualified, even expropriations (1828a, p. 175). The strong demand for social justice that permeates these postulates Krause brings also to the global level. Universal distributive fairness is, in fact, the central focus of his legal and social philosophy (A. Serra 1998).

Krause predicts that the people of the earth must ultimately enter into a global legal union (for which he drew up an impressively prescient constitution) in order to render to each what they are due (1811, p. 66). As an important stepping stone in this direction, Krause viewed regional federations of nation states, such as the European Union, for which, too, he developed detailed and far-sighted plans (1920, pp. 11). At a time when most believed the final word in the affairs between nations was endless strife, and when many eminent philosophers even went so far as to laud war as a premier gateway to civilization, Krause stood for world peace through global governance. Desiring a world of various creeds and customs that allowed for a peaceful interchange of ideas and practices, his concept of world federalism aimed at the cooperation of diverse powers under a common legal roof, not at a hegemonial superstate or a world monoculture (1803, p. 69). A peaceful world of free personal and economic interchange could arise, Krause believed, when the cultural diversity of regional characters and customs were allowed to thrive in a system that provided legal security for everyone. The fairness of the thus enabled cultural and commercial relations should be guaranteed by an international law centered around the idea of global distributive justice (1893, p. 108, 1828a, p. 172), with special attention to the needs of suppressed, colonized, and marginalized peoples.

The Natural World

Krause's philosophy considers nature not just as a resource for human life that, for all sorts of prudential reasons, ought to be used in a sustainable manner. He also holds that there is intrinsic value to all forms of life (1828a, p. 182). Human law, notwithstanding its anthroporelational focus, must avoid an anthropocentric bias and try to respect non-human interests, too. In stark opposition to most of his contemporaries who defined animals as mere objects, Krause concentrates on the subjectivity of animal life. In compelling passages, he argues that animals are beings that feel and perceive themselves and sometimes even reach a level of conscious personality.

Krause ranks all life forms according to their respective capacity to be a self because "everybody will agree that it [the law, C.D.] must be extended and expanded in regard to every being that we recognize as a self-centered, self-conscious, self-feeling and self-willing being" (1892, p. 14). Once in place, a critical hierarchy of beings puts the burden of proof on those who want to utilize nature for their purposes. They have to show that their actions will create a greater good than they set out to destroy (1892, p. 176).

This does not give animals the same rights as humans, but since some animals show rudimentary forms of personality, humans may well act as their proxies, representing their interests much like the interests of senile individuals, or of disabled people. If we hold human rights to be unconditional, and do not, for instance, dismiss the value of disabled persons when they cannot give something back in return for our care, why not acknowledge the unconditional rights of animal life—appropriately graduated by species—too?

For example, when it comes to the slaughtering of animals, Krause's position is that, because of their ontological supremacy, humans may kill lower life forms, as long as they can merely thus keep themselves alive (1904, p. 300). Krause held, however, that this qualified legitimation immediately becomes

a limitation as soon as people readily can find adequate food alternatives—and that, he thought, was predominantly the case already in his time!

II. The Reception of Krause's Works in Spain and Latin America

Krause's overall concern for underrepresented interests derives its inspiration, as we have seen, from deep within Krause's system (Dierksmeier 2007). Due to the integrative metaphysics and participatory methodology of his philosophy Krause puts so much emphasis on the harmonization of particular (individual and national) interests with the larger and cosmopolitan concerns of the human family (1811, pp. 164). In fact, it seems quite plausible that much of the international success of Krausismo can be attributed to this very tendency of Krause's "harmonic liberalism" (Gil-Cremades 1985, pp. 221).

How Krausismo entered Latin America is a complex and multifaceted history. In addition to and interconnecting with certain mainstreams of influence, on which we will focus presently, Krausistic thinking spread around the globe via numerous other routes. Important lines of reception ran, for instance, through Belgium and France, based upon the works of Heinrich Ahrens and Guillaume Tiberghien. In the following, we cannot do justice to all these ramifications but shall concentrate on how Krause's philosophy came to Spain and from there to Latin America.

It has been quipped that the success of Krausismo in Spain was due mainly to sharp opposition from the Catholic Church. There is some truth to this statement. Annoyed by Krause's firm stance against theocracy (1890a, pp. 50, 1811, p. 64), Catholic authors charged Krause's pantheism of pantheistic or atheistic tendencies or both (Polo y Peyrolón 1888, Ortí y Lara 1864, Zeferino González 1879). Krausistic writings (starting with some works of Ahrens) were quickly put on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (La Censura. Revista mensual, Madrid, I/10, April 1845, p. 74-76), which in turn made these books and their authors quite popular with Spain's intellectual avant-garde.

Sanz del Río's Adaptation of Krause's Philosophy

None of this, however, could have put Krause firmly on the map, had there not been the towering figure of Julián Sanz del Río (1814-1869). Thanks to a research grant he had received to bring back to Spain a modern philosophy suitable for social and legal reform, Sanz del Río had gone to study political theory in Germany, which was then the home of the vanguard of political philosophy. Spain felt the need to catch up with the rest of Western Europe, since it lagged behind in terms of democratic development, having yet to transform a superannuated structure of feudal and clerical hierarchies into a more modern, functionally organized society.

In Berlin, Hegel and his school ruled the academic scene. Sanz del Río, however, remained unimpressed and chose Krause as his intellectual patron. The reasons for his rejection of Hegel are telling. In a letter from the 26th of May 1862 to the Krause-disciple Karl David Friedrich Röder, Sanz del Río praises Krause's measured balance of speculation with experience over Hegel's sheer logicism (Ureña 1993, pp. 123). On the same day, del Río writes along the same lines to Leonhardi, Krause's son-in-law, that Hegel was forced by his own (only synthetic) method to confine himself to speculative comments on established facts, i.e., on the past (op. cit. p. 128).

His critique conforms with Krause's impetus to integrate empirical information, as it becomes available. Sanz del Río very much wanted philosophy to be open to all kinds of new vistas, especially, given his mission, for untried political experiments (Orden-Jiménez 1998b, p. 94). Hegel, however, used the speculative concept to transform the historically given reality

into a necessary component of the philosophical idea and system. Hegel thus cemented the given reality philosophically, lending too much emphasis to the then predominant model of government, i.e., the highly centralized and bureaucratic (Prussian) nation state, while disregarding alternative governance models.

With a view to Spain's need for social transformation from below, other Krausistas chimed in with this critique, also rejecting Hegel's system as too inflexible, monolithic, and too beholden to the state (García Cué 1985, p. 49). Krause, who emphasized the need for flexible government structures according to the principle of subsidiarity, proved much more attractive. Because of its colonial past, Spain had to deal with the remnants of empire and hence with intricate questions of international relations. At the same time Spain was struggling internally with semi-autonomous provinces and thus was also in dire need for intranational integration. So, Krause's laterally and vertically malleable federalism seemed indeed a natural choice.

The Ideal de la humanidad

Setting out to promote Krause's ideas, Sarz del Río compiled translations from Krause's works into a text published under the title *Ideal de la humanidad para la vida*. The book, which is in effect a translation of Krause's work *Urbild der Menschheit* (1811), augmented by translations from two articles from Krause (Ureña / Fernández Fernández / Seidel 1997, Orden-Jiménez 1998b), enjoyed a major triumph in Spain. This was in part owing to the impression that what the book presented was not simply German thought in Spanish language but genuinely Spanish philosophy.

A group of editors annotated (the widely transmitted second edition of) the text with a statement that declared the book "although inspired by the beautiful work of Krause, is an exposition completely free from its direction, accommodated to the spirit of our people and to the most pressing needs of its culture" (Sarz del Río 1871). Clever ruse or honest error; the mistaken impression that *Ideal de la humanidad* displayed "essential differences" and "entirely new parts" compared to its original, started the popular myth that Krausismo was an intellectual movement quite distinct from its German roots, authentically grown out of Spanish soil.

One can understand how the contents of Krause's works facilitated this erroneous conception. Idealistic in its quest for social change, yet realistic in its valuation of experience, advocating peaceful reform instead of violent revolution, and taking a clear anti-theocratic stance while never lashing out against religion itself, the philosophy of Krausismo seemed custom-made for nineteenth-century Spain. Its vertical cosmopolitanism linked Spain's traditional Catholic universalism to the country's need for political integration into Europe; at the same time, being laterally adaptive to all sorts of legal entities, it could also integrate most of the antagonistic forces of the contemporary Spanish society. No wonder then that the philosophy of the *Ideal de la humanidad* was quickly embraced as Spain's long awaited contribution to political liberalism.

The Institución Libre de Enseñanza

In an effort to consolidate and spread their worldview, Spanish Krausistas, led by the charismatic legal philosopher and pedagogic innovator Francisco Giner de los Ríos (Dominguez 2001), established the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE). The ILE, the first private academic institution in Spain to evade control by both state and Church (Garrido 2001), aimed to demonstrate the practical relevance of Krausist natural and social philosophy. Themes pertinent to the life of students were taught in an interdisciplinary fashion, with varying intensity according to the age and advancement of the

respective student. From year to year, the instructors returned to these themes, gradually adding more and more knowledge or methodological finesse to the subject (Mateo 1990). The Krausistas thus created a holistic learning experience, where in a cycle of years a student would go over a certain set of topics time and again. This "cyclical" education added to the political impact of Krausismo, as it managed to link the academic learning of the young Krausistas firmly with their private and social life (Garrido 2001, p. 59).

Overall, the project of the ILE seems to have been a great success. The years between 1870 and 1930 witnessed an outburst of Krausistic ideas in Spain's cultural life, as, to name but a few, the works of Galdos (Liria 1993), Clarín (Lissorgues 1996), and Serrano (García 1997) demonstrate. Numerous later prominent members of the Spanish and Latin American intelligentsia studied at the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, and many of them also lived communally together in the associated *Residencia de Estudiantes*. The Krausistic identity that the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* managed to inspire in its students reached deep into their private lives—according to their opponents, the Krausistas even displayed a common sense of fashion in their (allegedly predominantly black) garments. Until closed down by Franco, the ILE can claim to have been the single most influential educational institution in Spain (Trend 1934, Hennessy 1962, López Álvarez et al. 1996).

Yet there was also much Krausismo outside the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. Before the ILE was up and running, and based upon mostly non-Spanish sources, we witness an important Krausistic reorientation in Spain's socio-economic thinking. The most sustained effect in this field was enjoyed by *Tratado de Hacienda pública* (1869) by Piernas Hurtado. The *Tratado* that fleshes out Krause's social philosophy in the realm of macro-economics served several generations of Spanish students as their economics textbook. Far ahead of its time, Hurtado departs from an economics of unlimited growth in favor of a more socio-democratic welfare theory, and argues that quantitative standards do not suffice for the normative evaluation of the economy; instead, qualitative goals, elaborated by political philosophy, must be formulated (Malo Guillen 1998). This was an important theoretical achievement because it gave Krausismo the intellectual tools to be critical of excess capitalism without coming out in favor of socialism; the critique of social ills remains one from within the open society, based upon Krause's "harmonic" notion of freedom (Dierksmeier 2003b).

III. Latin American Reception

Krausismo came to Latin America in the form of (mostly French and Spanish) books, through emigrating and traveling Spanish scholars, and, last but not least, through a coterie of Latin American intellectuals who studied in Spain. A distinct Krausistic influence can be attested for Cuba (Arpini 1994), Mexico (Krumpel 2001), Brazil (Paim 1998), Columbia (Orden-Jimenez 1999), Guatemala (Stoetzer, 1998b, p. 136), Ecuador (Ossenbach Sauter 1983), and Peru (Himmelblau 1979, Vetter 1987). In the following, however, I shall concentrate on Argentina and Uruguay. For these are countries where I researched into the Krausistic past myself, and also places where Krause's thoughts still influence constitutional theory and presidential politics.¹

Krausistic Beginnings in Argentina and Uruguay

At the Río de la Plata Krausismo found prominent promoters in the Uruguayan president José Batlle y Ordóñez (1856-1929) and the Argentinian president Hipólito Yrigoyen (1852-1933). Carlos Otto Stoetzer ranks Yrigoyen as the source of "unquestionably the most remarkable and strongest Krausean influence in the entire Ibero American continent" (Stoetzer, 1998b, p. 360).

Argentina's president from 1916 to 1922, and again from 1928 to 1930, not only did Yrigoyen take Krause for his personal lodestar in politics (Gálvez 1983; del Mazo 1984), he also made Krausismo the intellectual bedrock of Argentina's socio-liberal party, the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR). The UCR, still a strong force in Argentinian politics, acknowledges this debt to Krause explicitly (see the party history on <http://www.ucr.org.ar/>), and, notably, recent leaders are still declaring themselves publicly as Krausistas (see Romero 1998).

A similar development occurred in Uruguay, where Krausismo was popularized by the end of the nineteenth-century through president José Batlle y Ordóñez. Like Yrigoyen, president Batlle felt personally indebted to Krausismo. During his second presidency he wrote on the title cover of his copy of Ahrens's "Curso" of Natural Law (that in form and content strictly follows Krause's legal philosophy), "This exemplar of the work of Ahrens [...] is a gift that I value much because through this great work I have formed my judgment about the law, which has served as my guide throughout my public life. 1913" (See the facsimile in A. Ardao 1951, pp. 176-77).

Practical results were to follow. In a famous speech on the 20th of June 1925 before the "Convención Batllista" in Montevideo, the "first" Batlle (the family has later produced more presidents) laid out a distinctly Krausistic socio-economic program that tied personal property back to the common good (H. Biagini, 1989, p. 222). The ensuing socio-democratic policies became baptized as "batllismo" (Ardao 1950, Ardao 1951). Up to date, "batllismo" continues to shape Uruguayan politics (Monreal 1993).

Under the tutelage of José Batlle y Ordóñez and Hipólito Yrigoyen, the early constitutions of Argentina and Uruguay took shape. Hence the curious fact that as addressee and sovereign of these constitutions not only the peoples of Uruguay and Argentina are invoked—but also, in good Krausistic fashion, "humanity." In later years, calls for intergenerational justice and environmental sustainability were added in the same spirit (Hector Gros Espiell 1966). With humanity as their ultimate political focus, both countries declared themselves for pacifistic and anti-imperialistic foreign policies. Argentina, for instance, withstood much pressure on part of the United States to enter World War I (Petersen 1964, pp. 367). In the aftermath of the war, Argentina criticized the Western alliance for misusing its position of power to deny their former enemies equal standing in the League of Nations (Bassett 1928, p. 95). Ultimately Argentina left the League of Nations in protest with the slogan "Victory does not confer rights!" a phrase that could have been taken directly from any contemporary Krausistic compendium of legal philosophy (Stoetzer 1998b, p. 384).

Until World War II, the ideas of Krausistic "harmonism" clearly dominated both domestic policies and foreign politics at the Río de la Plata (Piñeiro, 1989, pp. 7). Moreover, when in 1931 Spain gave itself a new constitution that aspired to several Krausistic tenets (Pérez-Prendes Muñoz-Arraco 1994), this document, although soon rescinded by Franco, inspired subsequent constitutional reforms in Argentina and Uruguay and thus reinforced the overall Krausistic influence there (Espiell 1966, p. 109).

Argentina and Uruguay – Return to the Future

The Golden era of Krausismo ended in the second half of twentieth century when the republics at the Río de la Plata fell prey to military juntas. Until the return of democracy (to Argentina in 1983 and Uruguay in 1984), Krausistic philosophy was suppressed. Then, however, it came to a quick renaissance. During their presidencies, Raúl Alfonsín in Argentina and Jorge Batlle in Uruguay (a distant relative of Batlle y Ordóñez, and son of the former; also Krausistic, president Luis Batlle) brought back

Krausismo to the Río de la Plata with a vengeance (Stoetzer 1998b).

Shortly after his inauguration Alfonsín published a book under the title *What Is Radicalism?* wherein he ascribes to the Krausistic legacy the pacifism, social harmonism, and cosmopolitanism of the Unión Cívica Radical, as well as its fervor in the protection of human dignity, its advocacy of a humanistic education, and its rejection of coercive measures throughout (Alfonsín 1985, p. 24, p. 83). Jorge Batlle on his part engaged in many public discussions, for example the debate over the role of religion in politics, with explicit references to Krause. This went so far that Uruguayan dailies prodded academics to comment on whether the president had interpreted Krause correctly (see Busqueda, Montevideo, 8.03.2001, Busqueda, 21.03.2001, *El Observador*, 20.04.2001).

Conclusions

Krausismo in Latin America is a complex phenomenon. Krause's ideas came to Latin American countries in manifold ways, and often the lines of reception crossed and intertwined. In addition, numerous Krausistic authors took liberties with the theories of Krause; they adapted them to their respective contexts and mixed them freely with other contemporary theories, creating hybrid ideologies such as the so-called "krauso-positivismo" (A. Jiménez García 1997). Naturally, an exacting study of the history of Krausismo must strive to differentiate clearly between Krause's original thoughts, transformations through translation, unplanned mutations, and, lastly, deliberate alterations.

Here, however, I emphasized not the differences but the commonalities of Krause's philosophy with the works of his disciples and interpreters. For some features are constitutive of almost all Krausistic positions. Let me name but three:

1) Especially important for the entire movement is the emphasis on the reconciliation of historical and scientific experience with speculative philosophy. Continuous internal reform keeps Krause's philosophy forever open to new problems and novel insights. This reform is brought about by the use of (dialogical, discursive, and phenomenological) methodologies that insist on the broadest possible intellectual participation.

2) From improved insight through universal education Krausists expect social improvements by voluntary reform "from below" rather than through forced (intellectual or practical) change "from above." Politically, this approach translates typically into a quest for gradual, harmonic transformation over radical and abrupt change, i.e., of peaceful reform over violent revolution.

(3) This commitment to peaceful change interlinks with Krause's idea of "harmonic" freedom. Tying the individual quest for liberty back to the promotion of freedom for all, the idea of a universal harmony of freedom demands to fight for all underprivileged and marginalized interests. The defense of debilitated persons and the fight for the rights of minorities is therefore not an accidental feature of Krausismo, nor are its impressive humanitarian cosmopolitanism and environmental sensitivity. For to follow Krause means, above all, one thing: that freedom is not only the prime end but also the premier means of all philosophical and political efforts.

Endnotes

1. For more information on Krausismo in the other Latin American countries I highly recommend Carlos Otto Stoetzer's comprehensive study *Karl Christian Friedrich Krause and His Influences in the Hispanic World* (1998b).

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From Revolving Time to the Time of Revolution: Mariátegui's Encounter with Nietzsche

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Was not the aesthetic liberation seen as, in effect, the antechamber of a possible social liberation?

(Quijano 153)

Introduction: Mariátegui's "Warning to the Reader"

Mariátegui's most influential work, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, reveals its Nietzschean lineage by beginning with a quote from *The Wanderer and His Shadow*:

I don't want anymore to read an author in whom we can discern his intention to write a book. Rather, I want to read those whose thoughts spontaneously became a book.¹

Following this quote, Mariátegui prescribes a "Warning to the Reader" in which he tells us that his book was written unintentionally, that he was commanded to write by a vital mandate, and that—invoking Nietzsche again—he infuses his ideas with blood. Like Nietzsche, Mariátegui demands that his reader recognize a kind of writing determined by unconscious forces, by spontaneous, vital drives that are intellectually creative. Both philosophers read and write books that are not defined in advance by intentions. Is this just a stylistic affinity between the two thinkers? What is the extent of Nietzsche's influence on this Peruvian thinker, on the first Latin American Marxist?²

In his "Warning" Mariátegui points to a connection between Nietzschean "unintentional writing" and a practice of liberating writing. *The Seven Essays*, he says, is incomplete. It is a gathering of essays that are beginnings, sketches—each harboring "the intention of an autonomous book" (Mariátegui 2002, 13). Intentional, autonomous books that, one could say, will not be written nor read by those like Mariátegui and Nietzsche. Mariátegui turns our attention, instead, to writing "undereath" autonomous books, a writing that yields the possibility for intentional books while itself not being comprehended by them—thus remaining unintentional, vital rather than deliberate. The reader is, thus, asked to consider the practice of writing beneath the *Seven Essays*. It would be easy to read this book as a collection of new programs of economy, nation building, education, religion, and literature. This, however, is misguided. The point, rather, is to engage the practice of writing through which these categories come to be released from the intentions that have defined them in order to acquire new ones, a practice of liberation that is itself without overarching intention. In this sense, Mariátegui, like Nietzsche, is interested in releasing those categories that have provided overarching meaning, value, and justification to social constructs of domination. Read in this way, *The Seven Essays* is akin to *The Genealogy of Morals*. Mariátegui seems to be engaged in the transvaluation of values.

The kinship with Nietzsche seems to end there. Mariátegui continues: "My judgments are nourished by my ideals, my feelings, my passions..." (2002, 14). At this point, a good Nietzschean would object: How can an unintentional writing be nourished by an ideal? Aren't "ideals" precisely ossified intentions that reinforce structures of value that become oppressive? Isn't the whole of Nietzschean thought an attack on the rigidity of ideals? Here Mariátegui appears as a poor reader of Nietzsche, and his practice of liberating writing seems to be compromised by his idealism. On the basis of Mariátegui's work, there are two possible responses to these criticisms: (1) Mariátegui's ideal is a socialist state resulting from the revolution of the proletariat. One would have to show why this ideal does not correspond to those that Nietzscheans destroy, why it is an ideal beyond the threat of nihilism. In order to do this, one would have to explain the content of Mariátegui's singular reading of Marx by studying the *Seven Essays* and his *Defense of Marxism*. This essay will not follow this path; it is, to some extent, a precursor to this path.³ (2) The kind of Mariátegui's vital idealism is different from that which enforces nihilism, namely, it does not impose a meaning on the world that makes it "valuable" or "intentional." One would have to show that Mariátegui's idealism allows him to engage in practices of liberation. One could discern here not only a departure from Nietzsche, but also a challenge to him. Furthermore, one could show that Mariátegui's criticism of Nietzsche responds to his postcolonial context, revealing the limits of Nietzsche's thinking for the liberation of postcolonial subjects. Here, one would have to turn to earlier essays such as those in *Alma Matinal*, and those published in journals such as *Varietades* and *Amauta*.⁴

We will pursue this second path. Both Nietzsche and Mariátegui consider their practice of writing as grounded in aesthetic states defined by myth⁵ that, in turn, are structured in a particular relation to time. In what follows, this essay will analyze the difference between the aesthetic states that Nietzsche and Mariátegui affirm and reveal the particular temporalities that correspond to them. It will show that while Nietzsche is engaged in the revolving time of the eternal return that enforces the destiny of a group to dominate others, feeding projects of imperialism and colonization, Mariátegui is, instead, engaged in a revolutionary temporality of simultaneity that is vitalized by indeterminate hope, responding to the need of postcolonial subjects for liberation.

Nietzsche's Tragic Myth and Destiny

The Birth of Tragedy reveals in tragic art the constitution of an aesthetic state that affirms life in its historicity beyond the reliance on projected ideals or values. This affirmation is attained through a dynamic relationship between two opposed forces: the Apollinian and the Dionysian.

While the Apollinian is a force of contemplative absorption that gathers us in our individuality and gives us to the appreciation of images as images, the Dionysian is the force of the dismemberment of individuality that belongs to the horrors of existence. In this dismemberment we become other than ourselves and become attuned to nature as a movement of coming to be and passing away without overarching meaning or purpose. While the Apollinian is a vision of the beautiful shine of images, the Dionysian is accompanied by a vision that corresponds to that of the dramatist when one comes "to see oneself transformed before one's own eyes and to begin to act as if one had actually entered into another body, another character" (Nietzsche, 64). This vision of oneself in transformation is the image of oneself living in and with the coming and passing of nature, an image of oneself—in the context of Greek mythology—as a satyr who, like Silenus, knows that: "What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be

bom, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you—is to die soon” (42).

Tragedy compounds Dionysian and Apollinian vision. In the chorus, the Dionysian reveler “sees himself as a satyr; and as a satyr; in turn, he sees the god” (64). The “shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being” (65), the god Dionysus, is presented in Apollinian vision. In this blended vision, Dionysian dismemberment and transformation is presented in Apollinian contemplative absorption, which constitutes the “metaphysical comfort... that life is at the bottom of things, despite all changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable.” This tragic aesthetic state is the ground for Nietzsche’s practice of transvaluation of values. Let’s turn to the operation of tragic myth in order to understand this aesthetic state fully.

In tragedy, myths are at work constituting an aesthetic state. Nietzsche distinguishes between the Apollinian image projected in tragedy and the myth—the story preserved in collective memories—that exceeds the presentation of the image in the tragic stage. This excess is due to myth being the material with which tragedy is composed and allows for the compounding of Apollinian and Dionysian vision. As we will see, this compounding is the result of simply following the thread of the story. Nietzsche explains:

Suppose we penetrate into the myth that projects itself in these lucid reflections... the bright image projections of the Sophoclean hero—in short, the Apollinian aspect of the mask—are necessary effects of a glance into the inside and terrors of nature; as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night. (67)

Outside of tragic art, Apollinian images operate as a veil of illusion to hide the horrors of existence: its lack of projected goals and meaning (41). Tragedy suspends this Apollinian operation. Stretching beyond the shine of the Apollinian image of the hero, tragic myth lures us to glance into the horrors of existence behind this image just by following the story, as it were. In this glance we remain in the contemplative absorption of Apollinian vision while tracing, through a story, the dismemberment of individuality at the core of life, the collapse and suffering of the hero, and the purposelessness of her intentions.

The aesthetic state that constitutes tragic vision involves an overcoming of ourselves in our attachment to meanings, intentions, values, and the development of a gaze that is similar to that of the tragic, silenic, chorus. This gaze does not “reconcile” the Apollinian and Dionysian, it remains a compounded vision. The Apollinian image, as Nietzsche states, heals the gaze of the spectator as “luminous spots.”

For Nietzsche, the impossibility of the reconciliation between the Apollinian and the Dionysian makes tragic myth operate as a parable:

We looked at the drama and with penetrating eyes reached its inner world of motives—and yet we felt as if only a parable passed us by, whose most profound meaning we almost thought we could guess and that we wished to draw away like a curtain in order to behold the primordial image behind it. The brightest clarity of the image did not suffice us, for this seemed to wish just as much to reveal something as to conceal something. Its revelation, being like a parable, seemed to summon us to tear the veil and to uncover the mysterious background; but at the same time this all illuminated total visibility cast a spell over the eyes and prevented them from penetrating deeper: (140)

Myth as “parable” undergoes a pendular movement, a back and forth, between the Apollinian image and the horrors of existence hidden beyond its limits. Myth comprises “motives” or, in our terms, “intentions,” directed by projections of value upon life. In its back and forth movement, the myth, now as parable, reveals such intentions with Apollinian shine, but without a ground—so that they remain uprooted, incomplete, without overarching purpose. The back and forth movement of the parable suspends the intentions that compose myths over an abyss. The pendular movement of the parable constitutes the tragic aesthetic state in its detachment from purposes, goals, values, and in its affirmation of life, an aesthetic state that enables the practice of the transvaluation of values.

Let’s turn now to the temporality that defines this tragic aesthetic state. Nietzsche gives a metaphysical interpretation of the pendular movement of tragic myth as parable: “The myth leads the world of phenomena to its limits where it denies itself and seeks to flee back again into the womb of the true and only reality” (131). For Nietzsche, the pendular movement of the tragic myth takes the form of a temporal circulation—a back and forth and back again that is the circulation of life as such, of nature.⁶ In this circulation, phenomena come to shine and pass away into indeterminacy. The eternal return, what we may call the revolving of time, is found through tragic insight. Metaphysically stated, the return is the being of the coming to be and passing away of phenomena. The tragic state affirms this return, it affirms life as a whole in its passing. Affirming the return of all phenomena, one affirms the present moment eternally in its passing. Nietzsche expands on this affirmation of the moment in the “dice throw” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which has been carefully analyzed by Deleuze. I will rely on his insights in the following analysis.

In the dice throw one can come to affirm the return of the same combination, which is to affirm the return of all possible combinations. This is not the affirmation of the possibility of getting the same combination after a number of tries. One affirms this combination as having already reproduced itself in the very moment of the dice throw, as if all possible combinations occur at once, having already occurred in this moment. Hence Deleuze writes: “...it is a matter of a single dice throw which, due to the number of the combination produced, comes to reproduce itself as such” (25). In the single moment of the dice throw one affirms all combinations by simply affirming the repetition of one of them. Deleuze recognizes two aspects in this affirmation: “The dice which are thrown once are the affirmation of chance, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of necessity” (26).

These two aspects reveal the tragic core of the eternal return—they re-constitute the pendular movement between the Dionysian and the Apollinian. The chance of the dice thrown corresponds to Dionysian dismemberment, the necessity of the formed combination corresponds to Apollinian individuation. Both aspects constitute the moment of the dice throw. In the affirmation of this moment, in the affirmation of both chance and necessity, we are affirming no particular combination among others but, rather, the necessary release of a combination out of chance—a combination that is “destined,” under which all the others are gathered, but which itself has no overarching meaning or justification. Even though there is no completed, meaningful, combination or intention in the circulation of the world of phenomena in the eternal return, there is fatality. Deleuze’s insight—which is fundamental to this discussion—is that the eternal return does not exclude fatality, that it is the affirmation of destiny. Bringing together the tragic aesthetic state and the eternal return, he writes:

That the universe has no purpose, that is, has no end to hope for anymore than it has causes to be known—this is the certainty necessary to play well... The dice throw fails because chance has not been affirmed enough in one throw. It has not been affirmed enough in order to produce the fatal number which necessarily reunites all the fragments and brings back the dice throw... for the couple probability-finality... Nietzsche substitutes... the couple chance-destiny... not a final, desired, willed combination, but that fatal combination, fatal and loved.... (27)

According to Nietzsche, tragic insight, through the temporality of the eternal return, allows us to affirm destiny. There is one combination through which all others are affirmed and, in this oneness gathered in repetition, we can be given to a singular destiny even on the grounds of chance, even if our intentions remain suspended over an abyss. This is the feeling of affirmation that I suspect the dice thrower has before the throw, dice burning in her hands.

Nietzsche finds in this tragic affirmation of destiny through the temporality of the eternal return the affirmation of a people's historical mission without need for projected value, purpose, or justification. For Nietzsche, the practice of transvaluation grounded on the tragic aesthetic state can go hand in hand with the affirmation of a destiny because it is defined by the temporality of the eternal return. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche is invested in the destiny of the German people. The affirmation of historicity through destiny constitutes a tendency for domination in Nietzsche's thinking, Nietzsche's revolving time is far from the time of revolution insofar as it can become the source of practices of domination, the destined domination of one race, culture, type, over another—as in the practice of colonization.⁷

Mariátegui's Aesthetic State of Liberation and the Time of the Indeterminate Hope of "Estirpes"

Mariátegui did not write a theory of art, but he left us with several analyses of works of art. We will focus on "Outline of an Interpretation of Chaplin." In this analysis, Mariátegui explicitly links *The Gold Rush* to Wagner's tetralogy, which is based on Greek Tragedy and is an example of what Nietzsche calls the "re-birth of tragedy." In this text, Mariátegui is in close proximity to Nietzsche's tragic aesthetics. Since this work is an outline, this essay will speculatively build upon it, making connections to other writings by Mariátegui and to Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

For Mariátegui *The Gold Rush* is predominantly a "myth" that descends from Wagner's music. Insofar as Nietzsche learned about tragic myth from Wagner, it is not far fetched to see in Mariátegui's text not just proximity, but an outline of a response to Nietzsche's tragic aesthetic state. It is not surprising then, that Mariátegui emphasizes the satirical nature of Chaplin's work. He is fascinated with the image of the tramp (closely related to that of the satyr) in its Dionysian traits: "He is always ready for adventure, for change, for departure" (Mariátegui 1996, 190).

Similarly to Nietzsche's analysis of tragedy, in *The Gold Rush* the Dionysian and Apollinian come into play. The search for gold is the Apollinian epic of capitalism. The hero of the film is not the tramp, but McKay, the "...ferocious, brutal, imperious gold miner..." (191)—capitalism's epic hero. The tramp in Chaplin's movie is the Dionysian counterforce to this epic. Through the senselessness of the tramp, who becomes McKay's partner in the search of gold, the intentionality of the epic hero is disclosed in its lack of ground. The unintentional, chance actions of the tramp have the effect of releasing the intentions of the epic of

capitalism from a definite sense and purpose. If we shift our attention to the tramp, we come to see the intentions of McKay as if suspended over an abyss, as if *The Gold Rush* were a Nietzschean tragic myth or parable.

The aesthetic state at issue here, however, is not tragic. The tragic state is constituted by the operation of myth compounding the Dionysian and Apollinian visions without reconciling them. It does this by luring us through a story into gazing underneath the shine of the tragic hero with Apollinian absorption, and by becoming a parable that moves back and forth between the Apollinian and Dionysian. This pendular movement is absent from the aesthetic state that Mariátegui brings up here in connection to *The Gold Rush*. It is true that the story of the tramp suspends the intention of capitalism over an abyss. This does not occur tragically, however, because the story of the tramp does not "exceed" the Apollinian image of McKay. The story of the tramp is always outside this image, even if it is wrapped around it. Due to this externality, we are left with no parable here, no back and forth between the Apollinian and the Dionysian—we are not swayed by the wisdom of the satyr. There is no pendular movement between McKay and the tramp—they exist in indifferent simultaneity. There is a break, an indifferent gap between them, out of which an aesthetic state is constituted that is different from the tragic one. This difference remains, even if in both states there is an affirmation of life in detachment from projected values, intentions, goals.

What is, then, the aesthetic state that corresponds to *The Gold Rush*, which, according to Mariátegui, is art at the height of its liberating function? How is the aesthetic state of liberation constituted? Attuned to the tramp, we are somewhat distracted, vitally drawn somewhere else, even if we do not recognize where that is. We recognize in the tramp the same kind of vital distraction: he is in love. His love, however, does not give him a sense of mission, it simply vitalizes him. At the same time, we realize that because of this vitality the tramp has a direction "it is impossible for the tramp not to find the mine" (191). Distracted, he is oriented towards a future, he has a kind of indeterminate hope, as if moved by an ideal which nevertheless does not give him a projected purpose or goal. We detect in the tramp a vitality that acts through him despite his intentions—just like the vitality in Mariátegui's writing. On the basis of the groundlessness of his intentions, the tramp is comically split between his intentions and his vitality. He comes to recognize himself in McKay's groundlessness from a distance, a recognition that becomes an affirmation: he affirms the lack of ground of intentions, but without parable, without wisdom, without tragedy—but with a kind of indifference.⁸ This indifferent affirmation takes the form of practices, rather than wisdom, that continues to release intentions from overarching meaning. One recognizes oneself in the tramp, and is drawn to this affirmation, except that one may not have a vital love, a passion or—in Mariátegui's words—an "ideal" or "myth" that acts underneath one's intentions and that enables one to affirm the groundlessness of intentions with vital indifference in indeterminate hope. The aesthetic state of liberation that Mariátegui presents here is that of openness to such a myth or ideal, which does not operate tragically.⁹

Let's turn now to the operation of Mariátegui's myth that defines his liberating—rather than tragic—aesthetic state. Myth, here, means that one is given to directionality without definite intention, something like an indeterminate hope. In this hope, which is vital like the tramp's love, values and intentions that had come to define identities lose their ground. This loss of ground, according to Mariátegui, bestows one with an "intimate historical meaning"—a historical meaning that belongs to one's "estirpe" or "stock," as we will soon see. While Mariátegui's

notion of historical meaning could be seen as being similar to Nietzsche's affirmation of destiny, in what follows we will see how they differ.

In his essay, "The Indigenous Question," Mariátegui explains this mythical operation of liberation. He shows how the category of race has oppressed the Quechuas. Through the myth of socialism, the intentions and meanings that have come to define the force of this category lose ground. At the same time, they do not simply disappear: they remain as a plurality open to the acquisition of new meanings. They are given, as it were, simultaneously in a moment of time, dislodged from overarching meaning and within a vital horizon of indeterminate hope. In other words, there is no eternal return here, no sameness, no plurality of "combinations" subsumed under the affirmation of one of them in its repetition—no destiny. The affirmation of one's historicity happens, rather, when a kind of indifference in the subject undergoing liberation allows her to see those categories that oppressed her as something to critique, to investigate, as harboring incomplete intentions that might give her to further moments of liberation, even to parallel, simultaneous lineages and histories opened within a horizon of indeterminate hope. The difference from Nietzsche is fundamental: Mariátegui does not affirm a destiny, he does not affirm a race or culture or ethnicity. On the other hand, he does not forget them or discard them. Rather, he sees in the critique of them as a practice of liberation the possibility of, for example, "converting the racial factor into a revolutionary factor." In these kinds of investigations, like the Seven Essays, Mariátegui finds the affirmation of our historicity—not in a revolving time, but in the plural, simultaneous, and liberating time of revolution.¹⁰

Mariátegui understands the aesthetic state of liberation as self-interpretation. Probably the best account of this state is given at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when Aureliano reads Melquiades' parchments about the history of his family and begins to "...decipher that instant that he was living, deciphering as he lived it" (Márquez, 416)¹¹—opening simultaneous times within his present moment. And this infuses an indeterminate hope within him, one that presents him, duplicates him, as deciphering "as if he were looking into a speaking mirror." Turning the pages of the book of his family's history, Aureliano sheds the stories, intentions, motives that had come to define him; all of this with a kind of indifference in reading, as if simply following a story, a myth, without overarching meaning that liberates him. This myth does not become a parable and is not structured by the eternal return. Rather: "...everything written...was unrepeatable...because stocks [estirpes] condemned to a hundred years of solitude do not have a second chance on earth" (416).

Detaching himself from senses of projected meaning and purpose, Aureliano discovers the unrepeatability of time, the simultaneity of time, rather than its return. Melquiades had not organized events in conventional time, but he wrote so that all events occurred simultaneously (350). "Simultaneous time" resists time's revolving that is, the subsumption of all "combinations" under the outcome of one dice throw. He is not given, then, to the throw the dice, no combination will return. Nor is he given to subsume all combinations into one: he does not affirm a destiny. Rather, he only comes to affirm his "stock" or "estirpe" that composes him underneath the groundless intentions that have unfolded in one hundred years of solitude and that gives him vitality to read indifferently about his past, future, present, in his present moment. Márquez presents an unfolding of simultaneous time that vitalizes peoples without destiny and that brings them to the recognition of the indeterminate hope in the horizon of which their "estirpe" or

"stock" has come to be unrepeatable. An unrepeatable "estirpe" within a plurality of lineages and histories defined by groundless intentions but with vital direction that can come to strike one when reading a book written with blood—like the Seven Essays. Books that are defined by vital ideals that bring us to liberation within indeterminate hope, books that write about "estirpes" rather than "races" or "cultures" or "nations."¹²

Mariátegui's favorite poet, César Vallejo, wrote a poem called "The Eternal Die." In it, the poet, like Zarathustra, comes to play die with god. Unlike Zarathustra, he seems indifferent to the throwing of the dice, they do not burn in his hand. He turns to god and says:

My God, on this deaf, dark night,
you'll not be able to play anymore, because the Earth
has become a chipped and rounded die.¹³

(Vallejo, 327)

There is no repeated, destined combination in the dice throw. We have played too many times. There are now only "estirpes."

Endnotes

1. All the translations of the Seven Essays are mine. I translated Mariátegui's translation of Nietzsche into English.
2. Ofelia Schutte gives helpful pointers for this comparison. This essay departs from her position that "Perhaps the categories Nietzsche employed to set forth an analogous thesis regarding the power of myth and the decadence of contemporary European civilization—such categories as the 'Dionysian,' 'Apollinian,' and 'Socratic'—were too far removed from political reality to satisfy Mariátegui" (Schutte 1993, 42-43). This essay shows that the connection between aesthetics and politics that Nietzsche pursued with these categories is one that Mariátegui takes seriously.
3. This essay does not engage the Seven Essays. It, rather, tries to understand the way to read it or the way to interpret Mariátegui's Marxism. In order to do this, we must turn to earlier writings by Mariátegui that focus on aesthetics.
4. Interpreters of Mariátegui usually focus on his political writings without regard to his aesthetics. This essay shows the limits of such projects and the need to understand in which way politics and aesthetics are connected in Mariátegui's thought.
5. Just like Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, Mariátegui's aesthetics is based on a notion of "myth." Both find in myth, in Ofelia Schutte's words, "the birth of a new type of consciousness" (Schutte 1993). The task for us is to reveal the differences and similarities between Nietzsche's and Mariátegui's myths. The claim here is that this comparative study should complement those that focus on the relationship between Sorel and Mariátegui. For helpful insights into the difference between Sorel and Mariátegui, see Ofelia Schutte 1993 and Michael Löwy 1998.
6. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche is engaged with the metaphysical dilemma between the "thing-in-itself" and "appearances." Inspired by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche wants to show that tragedy offers a solution to this metaphysical riddle through the relationship between the Dionysian and the Apollinian. As we will see, this metaphysical orientation commits him to a particular temporality.
7. Ofelia Schutte has a lucid analysis of the implications of Nietzsche's thought for politics in chapter 7 of *Beyond Nihilism*. She explicitly posits the question of the "political goals he [Nietzsche] hoped to achieve by means of the transvaluation of values" (Schutte 1984, 161).
8. One could argue that there is indifference in the Apollinian absorption of Nietzsche's tragic state. But the senses of indifference here are different. In the case of Nietzsche, what is at issue is an indifference of contemplation that constitutes the tragic wisdom of the satyr. In Mariátegui we find, instead,

indifference within practices and deeds that do not claim contemplative wisdom—like the deeds of the tramp. This move away from wisdom to practice constitutes one of the ways in which Mariátegui seeks to transform the character of philosophy. In particular, it constitutes a break from the emphasis of contemplation in Western aesthetics, a break that allows for the connection between aesthetics and politics that Mariátegui always pursues.

9. This analysis of Mariátegui's "myth" challenges any simple identification between Mariátegui and Sorel. As Ofelia Schutte shows, Sorel's myth has "the status of an intuition governing rational analysis" (Schutte, 44), while Mariátegui's myth does not "govern" an analysis, it vitalizes it. What is at issue, then, is an operation of myth quite different from Sorel's, which was a means to a determinate end. Schutte explains the difference between well when she states that Mariátegui's "use of myth is linked to the birth of a new type of consciousness" (Schutte, 44). In this regard, Mariátegui is closer to Nietzsche than Sorel.
10. Anibal Quijano, one of the best readers of Mariátegui, introduces the notion of the simultaneity of time as the time of Latin America. In his view, postcolonial Latin American subjects exist in such a time. He focuses on the way in which "what in Europe were stages of the history of capital, for example, here constitute both historical stages of and the present structural grounds for capital..." (Quijano, 150). For him, the issue is to break away from the unilinear temporality of progress that enforces modernity's subjugation of Latin America. This essay complements his project insofar as it shows Mariátegui's resistance not only to the temporality of progress, but also to that of destiny. It would be important to investigate whether in our epoch it is the temporality of destiny rather than that of progress that defines projects of imperialism.
11. The translations of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* have been altered.
12. Quijano suggests the connection between the simultaneity of time and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For him, Márquez more than anybody else succeeds at revealing this temporality. He adds: "And that, without a doubt, is worth a Nobel Prize" (Quijano, 150).
13. The translation is mine.

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BOOK REVIEW

Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identity

Jorge J.E. Gracia (ed.) Cornell University Press, 2007.

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This volume, emerging from a conference by the same title that took place at the University of Buffalo in April 2005, contains a range of essays by a number of the most prominent scholars in the field of philosophy of race. Besides the editor, the contributors include Linda Martín Alcoff, K. Anthony Appiah, Robert Bernasconi, J. Angelo Corlett, J. Garcia, Howard McGary, Eduardo Mendieta, Susana Nuccetelli, Kenneth Shockley, Diego von Vacano, and Naomi Zack. The scope of the collection is divided into two sections. The first addresses the salient concern of what race and ethnicity are, the relationship between the two categories, and the distinct qualities of each. The second section contains essays that delve into the practical effect of answering these questions for justice, public policy, and everyday political and social concerns regarding assimilation, exploitation, racism, and the like.

As the subtitle suggests, the issue of what constitutes Black and Latino identity spurs the questions that this volume addresses. As many of the essays illustrate, the terms "Black" and "Latino" can hardly satisfactorily or accurately identify the range of populations who might be categorized under one, sometimes both, of these terms. Black identity can address those who are descendants of slaves in the U.S., as well as Afro-Caribbean immigrants, as well as those who may not "visibly" appear to be part of either group, but who might self-identify as Black or are ascribed as such by others based on a range of interests and factors, including lineage, adherence to one-drop rules, and census categories. Similarly, Latino identity can encompass those who are indigenous to North America, those who were enslaved and forcibly removed from their homeland, those who were colonized, and those whose families immigrated elsewhere and now identify as Latino. Persons in the prior groups might include Mexican Indians, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Argentineans, among others.

The issues raised by the migration patterns, contingencies of national borders, linguistic and cultural practices, and the claims for recognition and a more just distribution of goods and opportunities, are not restricted to Black and Latino populations alone. Those who work in the philosophy of race and on issues pertaining to other amalgamated groups and diasporic populations (such as "Middle Eastern," "Muslim," or "Arab" populations, South and Southeast Asians, groups with self-conscious hybrid subjectivities such as Mexican-Hindus or "mixed" populations in the Caribbean) would do well to pay attention to the way these questions are handled by the authors in this volume. These essays address a broad range of issues pertaining to philosophy of race and race theory, ranging from the epistemological and metaphysical foundations of race and ethnicity (Appiah, Garcia, Gracia, Nuccetelli); the relation of race and ethnicity to gender (Zack); the history of philosophy of topics pertaining to ethnicity, race, and culture (Bernasconi, von Vacano); the exploration of the relation of race and ethnicity to intra-group hierarchies and political alliances (Alcoff); race-based institutions and questions of assimilation (McGary); to

public policy, classification, and justice (Shockley, Mendieta, Corlett).

Jorge Gracia, in his introduction to the collection, identifies four basic strategies as especially important in addressing the conundrums involved in describing and grounding race and ethnicity: “The first proposes to replace race with ethnicity. The second replaces race with the concept of racial identity. A third alternative combines race and ethnicity either in the concept of ethnic race or the concept of racial ethnicity. And a fourth keeps race and ethnicity separate, but develops new ways of conceiving them” (4). This framework applies to the contributors in the first section of this volume, many of whom develop their arguments along or against these lines. According to Gracia, most of the essays in the second half of the collection engage the political and moral implications of the use of racial and ethnic identities. The essays certainly fulfill this description, but they do much more: they examine the status and relations between various racial and ethnic groups, and the social assumptions and connotations (or “affect,” as Mendieta discusses) behind these relations. Since I cannot do justice to all twelve essays, I will focus on several that touch on issues of concern for scholars and students who may be interested in philosophy of race as it pertains to Black and Latino populations (in the context of the U.S.) as well as in relation to other groups. In this way, I can illustrate its far-reaching relevance to scholars across the racial, ethnic, and methodological spectrum.

The collection begins provocatively enough with the title of Appiah’s essay, which asks the question, “Does Truth Matter to Identity?” As usual, Appiah’s writing is straightforward, although it masks several complexities within the question that he sets out to address. In Appiah’s earlier writings, he points to the absence of objective grounds of racial categories and thus to the illusory nature of race. Here, he considers one issue that remains after dismissing race, namely, how to understand the status of identity labels that stubbornly remain despite the criticisms of erudite philosophers. Appiah’s primary concern here is with the status of a social identity that is not necessarily grounded in a true account. Can it retain an important place in a social interaction? Must it be dismissed? What happens if such an identity is ascribed to another person? Appiah’s answer is that even if an identity is discovered to be based on “importantly false beliefs,” the identity is still important. It is easy enough to agree with Appiah—if the person to whom the identity is important is the bearer herself.

What if the false beliefs surrounding the identity are articulated by one who ascribes the identity (and, hence, the false beliefs) to another? Appiah answers here in what I would call a “future hopeful” tense: False beliefs ascribed to another do not matter as long as such identities (X) don’t harm the person who is ascribed as X but doesn’t identify as X. But what if the false beliefs are harmful to the person to whom it is ascribed? Consider Appiah’s own example, namely, the social identity of a “witch.” This is an identity that carried serious social weight several centuries ago in the U.S. Appiah points out that “witch” qualifies as a social identity because at least some persons are identified as such. Yet, presumably no one—not even self-ascribed “witches”—identify with the negative moral properties then associated with the identity of “witch.” Hence, it is still an important social identity, despite the false beliefs about them. Still, is the identity—because of the false beliefs associated with it—not destructive? After all, the false beliefs pertaining to this important social category led to witch-burning.

Appiah’s response—that false beliefs do not undermine the importance of a social identity as long as they don’t harm the person to whom the beliefs are ascribed—seems less

than satisfactory. The potential of being harmed is precisely the fear for those who are ascribed as X but don’t identify as such, as we see in the case of civil wars, genocidal conflicts, and segregationist public policy (as in the distribution of opportunities such as education, voting rights, and housing accommodations).

Gracia’s essay, “Individuation of Racial and Ethnic Groups?” considers objections to his argument that racial and ethnic groups “are best conceived as extended historical families.” This “Familial-Historical View,” as labeled by Gracia, understands racial groups as not requiring “first-order properties” such as common skin color or phenotypes, but rather as being bound by “familial” ties—at least metaphorically. The metaphor is supposed to point to common histories that then “generate properties among members of groups and serve to unite them among themselves and to distinguish them from others in particular contexts” (84). The primary objections to this view are articulated in other fora, by Richard Bernstein and Appiah. On Gracia’s Familial-Historical View, being a part of a racial or ethnic requires that groups must have a unique history. Bernstein’s objection to Gracia’s position is that in order for an ethnic group to have a unique history, its members must know this history, which Gracia’s view does not require. Without knowing the history, Bernstein suggests, a group cannot understand itself as unique. Gracia’s response is that this requirement is not necessary, and that it is an impossible task for all members to know its own unique history. Gracia charges Bernstein with two different uses of history—an epistemological sense, in which a history is “ours,” that is, a history of the group who identifies uniquely, but also a metaphysical sense—in which there is some history that makes a group what it is, that is to say, such that a group knows when some history is “our history.” It is the second sense that Gracia rejects, because it is impossible to know and unnecessary for a group to define itself. But I suspect that Bernstein’s charge has not been completely addressed. There is a question that remains, despite Gracia’s rebuttal: Even if a group is bound by a unique history—one that is “ours”—and even if we do disagree about the details of “our history,” how do I know that I am a part of that group and therefore share in that history without having other external indicators?

To draw on an example in Gracia’s essay, consider the case of adopted children who grow up believing that they are the natural offspring of their parents—if I am the adopted half-(East) Indian daughter of parents, both of whom are Latino/a, but my Indian background is unknown to myself and to my parents, and I am read as Latina by others—would I still be Indian or am I Latina? Do I not still need to “know,” somehow, that I am able to claim the history of (East) Indians?

Gracia’s and Appiah’s work might be even more powerful were there some clarification of the details of the externalism in their accounts. Consider the following question with regard to Appiah’s essay: If false beliefs don’t undermine the importance of a social identity, then why bother to insist that others “get the facts” of my identity correct? Clearly, part of the answer is “because I might be harmed,” which Appiah seems to acknowledge implicitly but doesn’t develop. Similarly, Gracia’s account raises the following question: If the members of one’s group don’t know “their” history, or that there is a history that can be called “theirs,” then who needs to know this history so as to be able to accurately ascribe an identity to someone?

Robert Bernasconi’s essay, “Ethnic Race,” explores the question of how to understand race and ethnicity in relation to culture. Bernasconi’s is an excellent consideration of the history of philosophy of the concept of “ethnic race” as first conceived by Alain Locke in the early twentieth century. Bernasconi turns to Locke to understand the context in which the need for such

a concept emerged, and to use that understanding to explore why the categories of race and culture are so limited in their usefulness in the contemporary moment. Bernasconi points to David T. Goldberg's and Alcoff's attempts to surmount the limited usefulness of these concepts by turning to ethnorace and ethno-race, respectively. Alcoff, who draws on Goldberg's notion, does so for different reasons than does Goldberg. According to Bernasconi, Goldberg's notion of ethnorace construes racial identification, and the parameters of racial group identity, as an issue of cultural choice, whereas for Alcoff, ethno-race encompasses both race and ethnicity as necessary factors to understand Latino/a identity in the U.S. (124). But both conceptions point to the difficulties of moving away from race as a biological category while retaining the term for the purposes of grounding identity in something less contingent than culture. Bernasconi shows the flexible usage of race and culture during Locke's day, and the logic of Locke's view that race, while not biological or immutable, nevertheless can accommodate traits that are inherited "but without thinking of [inheritance] primarily in physical terms" (130). Bernasconi reviews the sources of Locke's position, taking care to distinguish Locke's appreciation of Franz Boas' recognition that race need not be fixed or permanent from Robert Lowie's disarticulation of race from culture, ultimately arguing that Locke's thinking draws on the latter's work.

Howard McGary's thoughtful essay, "Racial Assimilation and the Dilemma of Racially Defined Institutions," marks the beginning of the "Racism, Justice, and Public Policy" half of the volume. McGary offers an analysis of the seeming tension of Frederick Douglass's position that while race-based institutions are necessary for the social, political, and economic development and assimilation of African Americans, it is still morally problematic to take "pride" in one's race, since this fact is not something over which one has control. McGary considers Douglass's position in light of criticisms by anti-assimilationists such as Martin Delaney that he failed to appreciate the importance of race, and other assimilationists who deny that race has any salience whatsoever. In doing so, McGary levels a question at racial eliminativists about whether justice can be achieved without addressing the discrimination and other negative effects induced by racial characteristics. Even if race were not considered a natural property of persons, McGary suggests, achieving racial justice would depend upon whether it was possible for blacks and whites to have the same view of reality, or whether "racial reality" was largely dependent upon racial standpoint theory, i.e., that what one believes about race (and by extension racial justice) depends on where one is located racially. Drawing on an example about racial profiling in New Jersey, McGary points to the clear divide between the beliefs of black and white motorists as to whether racial profiling exists (black motorists believe it does; white motorists believe the opposite). McGary points to four possibilities, three of which (he generously concludes) do not depend upon a permanently entrenched racial standpoint, and therefore suggest that one day whites and blacks might be able arrive at the same position on racial profiling. Similarly then, Douglass's position—that although race-based institutions are necessary for the moment, they need not always be—does not require a categorical commitment to racial categories. By the same token, McGary warns racial eliminativists that their hopes for complete assimilation may occur at a much more moderate pace than they hope for.

Linda Martín Alcoff's essay, "Comparative Race, Comparative Racisms," argues that we must be attentive to the operative meanings of racial identities (and not in their conceptual or abstract meanings). In other words, how do racial identities function with regard to political, economic,

and social stratification and exploitation? Through this lens, we might be better able to understand intra-group challenges, class differences, hierarchies, and injustices, and vulnerabilities vis-à-vis other "related" as well as "outside" groups. Alcoff's notion of race reflects an aspect of social identity "that is marked on the body through learned perceptual practices of visual categorization" (172). This notion of race is connected to "ethnic terms," which are in turn connected to the historical, cultural, and structural factors and practices of groups, rather than to their physical appearances. Drawing on the example of nursing home workers in New Jersey, Alcoff points out that non-white immigrant workers across a range of backgrounds are vulnerable to similar kinds of discrimination—along the lines of xenophobia, racism, and even speech regulation if they converse in languages other than English. Of this larger group, women in turn face other common concerns such as sexism and sexual harassment. But within the larger group, there are hindrances to creating political, economic, and social alliances among workers of various ethnic backgrounds even when they emerge from racial backgrounds that are perceived to be the same. Such differences can result in economic and political stratification in the same workplace. As such, Alcoff suggests that by understanding the operative meaning of racial identities, we can become more attuned to the solidarities, alliances, and overlapping political agendas that may exist but which may not be as well-articulated or concretely realized when seen through the abstract meaning of a particular racial identity.

Alcoff frames this insightful argument by arguing that we should neither understand racial and ethnic identities as intractable essences, as Samuel Huntington does in regard to Latino (and most other) identities, nor should we be interested in eradicating racial distinctions, as Richard Rodriguez argues in his book,¹ since neither attends to the political, social, and cultural exigencies and tensions that are involved in intra-group relations. She develops her argument against Rodriguez extensively, pointing out that his aim is a psychological one, and one that still pays homage to a white supremacist framework, in which brownness merely symbolically reconfigures the racial substance underlying racial power structures in the U.S. As she says, "Rodriguez's 'brown' is really just a form of whiteness in drag since it aims to deny the legacy of history that remains in cultural identities...[w]here blackness irresponsibly denies truth, and brownness signifies only the lack of substance, whiteness, as it is lived and imagined, represents freedom and the possibility of self-determination. Although his ostensible thesis is that the future is brown, Rodriguez's real thesis is that the future will be, and should be, white" (186). Alcoff's discussion of Rodriguez at moments appears to be a second paper altogether until one reaches the conclusion of her essay. There she points out that it is the misguided hope of color-blindness that diminishes, even precludes, the possibility of solidarities and alliances that organizers and activists try to cultivate in order to challenge and push through the common discrimination faced by members of seemingly distinct (and seemingly common) groups. By challenging "brownness" as another form of "whiteness," Alcoff suggests, philosophers might be of assistance in the on-the-ground fight against exploitation and discrimination.

Eduardo Mendieta's essay, "Racial Justice, Latinos, and the Supreme Court," is a reflective consideration of the way that "racial affect," or those emotions towards "racially marked persons," as held by those in positions of legal, social, and importance, significantly influence law and public policy. In so doing he continues the theme of considering intra-group hierarchies and solidarities introduced in Alcoff's essay. Mendieta looks at the status of racial apartheid through the history of the school and prison systems in the United States.

He draws on a wide range of scholarship, from the literature in philosophy of race and critical race theory, U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Richard Kluger's emotionally pained social history of that decision, and the remarkable battles waged by everyday denizens to challenge the racial order of segregation,² and other sources, to argue that racial justice for Latinos in the United States cannot be achieved without considering their relationship to battle for racial and social justice on the part of African Americans. As Mendieta says, "The challenge for Latinos in their quest for social justice is to embrace a civil rights agenda that benefits all oppressed minorities while at the same time not betraying the quest for racial justice that was part of the Black civil rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century" (222, my emphasis). Focusing on the relation and connections between distinct groups who are fighting for justice cannot be emphasized enough, especially in the current moment. Restrictions of human and political rights are divided in deceptively insular ways in the U.S.: restriction of immigrant rights are thought to pertain primarily to Latinos, human rights and eradication of habeas corpus rights are thought to be directed towards persons of Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian origin, and systematic incarceration to be directed towards men and women of African American descent. The range of rights listed and violated, however, affect all of these racial/ethnic groups, as well as others whose persecution is invisible to the mainstream media and even most academic scholarship.

The last essay that I will review here continues this theme. J. Angelo Corlett's essay, "Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy" is perhaps one of the most forceful, if not the most controversial, article in this volume. He presents the practical implications of a "genealogical" conception of race (while fully insisting that there is no metaphysical basis for race) in which one's racial identity follows from one's ancestors' group identity. Corlett's genealogical definition of racial identification denies that a person whose genealogical roots can be traced to one group (say a female child who is of Native ancestry) should be understood as anything but "Native," even when raised in a different cultural (racial?) context. His reason is that these types of subtleties are too complex for public policy to handle well. From this conception, he defends what he calls a "differentialist conception of affirmative action." Under the premise that affirmative action programs are "at least in part a collective response to racist harmful wrongdoings in the past and present, and insofar as groups experience such racist harmful wrongdoings to varying degrees, then each group ought to receive affirmative benefits to the extent that it has experienced racist harmful wrongdoing, all relevant things considered" (229-30).

The last part of the definition—all relevant things considered—is the harbinger of the controversial force of Corlett's argument. Corlett argues that, on the genealogical conception of race, white women, or "Anglas," are not deserving recipients of affirmative action because of their collaboration in the oppression of men and women in other racial populations. He points to the differential treatment of African American, Native American, and Latino men and women at the hands of U.S. law and public policy in regard to sexual crimes (both as suspects and as victims), and the role that Anglos (men and women) have played in exacerbating their persecution. He states, "...[I]t is also true that Anglas on average, on balance, and as a class have served as oppressive forces against Native and African American men in particular. This is true both in terms of their acts of racist oppression, but also in terms of their moral negligence in failing to do the right things when the most oppressed needed their support" (233). Corlett's argument raises the question of collective agency and guilt,

which he has addressed elsewhere. As importantly, he seems to address the corollary of (a topic related to) Alcoff's and Mendieta's discussion of intra-group relationships, namely, the hierarchies within groups categorized collectively as oppressed. The undifferentiated status of oppressed groups appears to erase salient questions of complicity in the exploitation of other groups. In other philosophical literature, such as Hannah Arendt's work, this question is raised through the discussion of parvenus (those who ascend at the expense of others in their own group).³ This is an urgent and compelling issue, although much more work needs to be done in defining the relationships between oppressing agents and victims within the same group and in relation to other populations (and in terms of political and social class, and gender and race).

Though I have omitted full discussions of the essays by Garcia, Zack, Nuccetelli, Shockley, and von Vacano, their articles contain no less thoughtful analyses. In all, this collection contains an excellent range of essays. Some are appropriately in conversation with each other; some develop a singular theme, and others are nicely interspersed with different topics; but all of these essays will provoke and raise more questions even as they answer others. This collection marks the cutting-edge of new work in philosophy of race. It is sure to be of use to the scholar as well as to those teaching (and taking) courses in race, philosophy, public policy, ethnic studies, and sociology courses.

Endnotes

1. Richard Rodriguez. *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York: Viking Press, 2002).
2. Richard Kluger. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).
3. Hannah Arendt. *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Books, 1948/1994), ch. 3. I discuss a related phenomenon in Falguni A. Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (SUNY Press, forthcoming 2009), ch. 6 "Border Populations: Boundary, Memory, Moral Conscience."

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Call for papers

The Spring 2009 Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues will be devoted to the topic of Hispanic and American Philosophy. The purpose of this special edition is to investigate the important connections between American Pragmatism and Spanish philosophers from Spain and Latin America. Articles related to this topic are strongly encouraged but submissions on any topic related to Hispanic/Latino philosophy will be considered. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All submissions must be limited to 5,000 words (twenty double-spaced pages) and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and The Chicago Manual of Style formatting.

Call for book reviews

Book reviews in any area of Hispanic/Latino philosophy, broadly construed, are welcome. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Book reviews may be short (500 words) or long (1,500 words). Electronic submissions are preferred.

Deadlines

January 1, 2009

Please send all articles, book reviews, queries, comments, or suggestions to:

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Formatting Guidelines

The APA Newsletters adhere to The Chicago Manual of Style.

Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use italics instead of underlining. Use an “em dash” (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).

Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:

- John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90

Future Topics

Spring 2009	Hispanic and American philosophy
Fall 2009	Any topic on Hispanic/Latino philosophy
Spring 2010	Ethnicity and Race
Fall 2010	Any topic on Hispanic/Latino philosophy

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