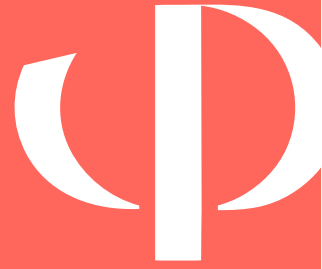


# Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy



SPRING 2016

VOLUME 15 | NUMBER 2

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

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ROBERTO SIRVENT, GUEST EDITOR

VOLUME 15 | NUMBER 2 | SPRING 2016

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## FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Roberto Sirvent

HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

I am incredibly grateful to Carlos Alberto Sánchez for inviting me to put together this special issue on “Navigating the Personal, Political, and the Postcolonial.” I do not often get the chance to collaborate with a person I have admired for so long. Carlos afforded me an experience that I can only call an intellectual adventure. In the process of putting together this special issue, I met Latin@ thinkers whose work is a breath of fresh air, who make me want to read everything they have ever written. They invited me to ask deeper questions, different questions. Their ideas have helped me both learn and *unlearn* what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful. I have made new conversation partners and new friends. I owe this all to Carlos and everyone who has made the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* what it is today.

My goal for this issue is a modest one. “Navigating the Personal, Political, and Postcolonial” brings together voices that help us imagine what a Latin@ political philosophy might look like today. The following articles shy away from discussing topics such as justice, equality, and rights *in the abstract*. Rather, they model a philosophy *from below*. It is a philosophy born out of suffering, of struggle, of oppression. It forces us to rethink what questions are asked, what methods are employed, which disciplines are engaged, and, perhaps most importantly, whose voices are heard.

To locate a consistent strand or theme in all the contributions below is to miss a larger point. Just as a Latin@ political philosophy cannot rely on just one voice, it also cannot rely on just one method, approach, or system. What this issue *can* allow for is a space to rethink what philosophy is, how philosophy is done, and *who* gets to participate. Indeed, these questions are all *political* questions. Which is why a Latin@ political philosophy takes seriously not just hot-button political issues like immigration and citizenship rights, but deeper questions about epistemology, phenomenology, and coloniality. As our contributors show, the best kind of political philosophy is done from a position of love: A love of wisdom and understanding. A love of interaction. Of listening. Of openness and vulnerability to others. The Latin@ political philosopher loves these things in spite of the cruelty and suffering of which she writes.

Our special issue on “Navigating the Personal, Political, and Postcolonial” begins with two great interviews. First,

we speak with María Lugones, associate professor of comparative literature and philosophy, interpretation, and culture at Binghamton University in New York. Lugones shares a little about her time growing up in Buenos Aires and how it paved the way for her intellectual journey into the field of Latin@ philosophy. We learn about the many worlds she’s confronted and the very few in which she has found a home. Lugones also shares with us many valuable philosophical insights, among them the difference between communality and community, the role of “play” and “surprise” in philosophical praxis, and a plea for decolonial philosophers to take gender more seriously. In the second interview, Carlos Sánchez interviews Manuel Vargas, professor of philosophy and law at the University of San Francisco and the inaugural winner of the Essay Prize in Latin American Thought. The interview is a brief, yet revealing, portrait of Vargas’s journey into philosophy, the sources and trajectory of his award-winning work, and his thoughts about the future of Latin@ philosophy in the United States.

We are also honored to feature five outstanding essays that are sure to interest our readers. The first, by Lori Gallegos del Castillo, is the winner of the 2015 APA Prize in Latin American Thought. In it, del Castillo challenges a Heideggerian reading of expertise through a careful and original confrontation with the work of Latina philosopher Ada María Isasi-Díaz.

In the second article, “‘Immigrant’ or ‘Exiled’? Reconceiving the *Desplazada/os* of Latin American and Latina/o Philosophy,” Amy Reed-Sandoval raises significant problems with the immigrant-exile distinction currently dividing Latin American and Latina/o thought, and instead urges philosophers to speak of *desplazada/os*. In doing so, philosophers are better able to capture what is most significant about the immigrant and exile experience: “the phenomenon of being pressured to leave the place one currently inhabits in a gravely unjust manner.”

In her article, “Gilles Deleuze and Gloria Anzaldúa: A Matter of Differences,” Robyn Henderson-Espinoza offers what she calls “an account of difference as difference in itself—always on the other side of difference, or *del otro lado*.” Recognizing this orientation of *del otro lado* as the principal orientation of Latin@s, Henderson-Espinoza finds in Deleuze and Anzaldúa an expression of difference that privileges and embraces “an ontological plurality of the self.”

In our fourth article, Elena Flores-Ruíz wrestles with ideas of authenticity and alienation in her provocatively titled “Existentialism for Postcolonials: Fanon and the

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Politics of Authenticity.” In examining what a “decolonial existentialism” might look like, Flores-Ruíz locates “a deeply political aspect that cannot sever the ontic from the ontological in questions of humane existence. It is always already political.” Key to this examination, she argues, is a proper recognition of the way “methodological racism” operates, and how it affects those existing—if we can call it that—in the zone of non-being.

In the final article, José-Antonio Orosco proposes the idea of Mexican American philosophy as a new field of study capable of correcting any systematic epistemic distortion in U.S. American social and political philosophy that results from the lack of diversity within the profession.

We close our issue with four book reviews. Stephanie Rivera Berruz tackles the book *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity: Jorge Gracia and His Critics*, edited by Iván Jaksic. In it, she finds not only a volume rich with philosophical content and import, but a model for “what critical philosophical dialogue ought to look like.” In Veronica Sandoval’s review of *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*, edited by Ellie D. Hernández and Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson, Sandoval finds an impressive group of cultural critics who take a praxis-oriented approach to move beyond the simplistic question “of what it ‘means’ to be Latino/a.” Elías Ortega-Aponte reviews Mayra Rivera’s book *Poetics of the Flesh*, a provocative exploration of how body and flesh relate and what it means for the ways we experience, touch, and become vulnerable to one another. Finally, Daniel Camacho reviews the book *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*, written by Margaret Randall. According to Camacho, Randall “attempts to recount and solidify” Santamaría’s importance for thinking about justice, reminding us not only of her contributions to the Cuban Revolution, but also of her pivotal work with Casa de las Américas.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

### THE 2016 ESSAY PRIZE IN LATIN AMERICAN THOUGHT

The APA’s Committee on Hispanics cordially invites submissions for the 2016 Essay Prize in Latin American Thought, which is awarded to the author of the best unpublished, English-language, philosophical essay in Latin American philosophy/thought. The purpose of this prize is to encourage fruitful work in this area. Eligible essays must contain original arguments and broach philosophical topics clearly related to the specific experiences of Hispanic Americans and Latinos. The winning essay will be published in this newsletter.

A cash prize accompanies the award along with the opportunity to present the prize-winning essay at an upcoming divisional meeting. Information regarding submissions can be found on the APA website at [http://www.apaonline.org/?latin\\_american](http://www.apaonline.org/?latin_american). Please consider submitting your work and encourage colleagues or students to do the

same. Feel free to pass this information along to anyone who may be interested. **The deadline is June 5, 2016.**

The committee is also soliciting papers or panel suggestions for next year’s APA three divisional meetings. The deadline for the Eastern APA committee session requests is rapidly approaching, so please send any ideas to Grant Silva ([grant.silva@marquette.edu](mailto:grant.silva@marquette.edu)), who will relay these suggestions to the rest of the committee.

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## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* is accepting contributions for the fall 2016 issue. Our readers are encouraged to submit original work on any topic related to Hispanic/Latino thought, broadly construed. We publish original, scholarly treatments, as well as reflections, book reviews, and interviews.

Please prepare articles for anonymous review. All submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All submissions should 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.

All articles submitted to the newsletter undergo anonymous review by members of the Committee on Hispanics.

### 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

Deadline for spring issue is November 15. Authors should expect a decision by January 15. Deadline for the fall issue is April 15. Authors should expect a decision by June 15.

Please send all articles, book reviews, queries, comments, or suggestions electronically to the editor,

Carlos Alberto Sánchez, at [carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu](mailto:carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu), or by post:

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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. See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

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## INTERVIEWS

### *Interview With Maria Lugones*

By Roberto Sirvent

HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

***One of the recurring themes of your work involves the messy, complicated, and often times conflicting ways in which different subjectivities and "worlds" collide in the formation of one's identity. What initially inspired you to write about these collisions and ambiguities?***

I came to the U.S. in 1967 from Buenos Aires, Argentina, at a time of state violence and significant personal violence in my life. I was twenty-two. Two weeks after I arrived in Los Angeles, I began studying at UCLA in a climate of turmoil that I came to realize later was marked by a politics of group identification with struggles against racialized forms of oppression. Protests against the Vietnam War were also very present on the campus, tied to expressions of the countercultural movement. I was dressed formally, to go to the university, as I did in Buenos Aires, while protesting the military government. I was perceived with a mixture of amusement and disrespect by students. It was then that several mestizas with ash crosses on their foreheads stopped me on campus, introduced themselves, and were really friendly to me. This encounter stayed with me till this day. They recognized something in me and it took a long time to recognize it in myself. Later, I understood that this was the beginnings of the Chicano movement. I also looked up to the organized Black presence. I came to take pride in being a Latin American mestiza and later, a Woman of Color, in the coalitional sense. The context was one of collision of "worlds." I was escaping severe violence, both psychological and physical violence that I understood as of double meaning: my father was exercising violent control over me. At seventeen, I was not going to allow that control, and disobedience meant very bad consequences for me. I escaped to the U.S. and fell into a fragmented social context in which I did not fit. I learned to live attempting to decipher the many worlds in which I was not included, except as, at most, a blur. That's why the Chicanas speaking to me face-to-face was like an embrace. I was not attempting to read their "interiority," but the meanings they created and lived among their own at that particular time which enabled me to glimpse the contradictions and contestations in the society. A very nice memory: a graduate student with a car invited me to hear a singer at a bar. She was great. The singer was Nina Simone.

***I'm interested in the specific struggles that Latinas/os face today when it comes to self-identification. There are so many categories, discourses, and paradigms that we are forced to work with and choose between when it comes to expressing who we are. There's very little room or permission for Latinas/os to explore the kind of ambiguities***

***you write about. What does it look like for today's Latina/o philosophers to embrace these ambiguities? How have you managed to do so?***

I came to see the U.S. as a deeply racist society and, in response, I developed a respect for impurity, communality, and coalition, a need to dwell in their possibilities. Communality—different from community—takes different forms. One form is organic, the nation, the community, an inward movement of strengthening ways of being and knowing wrought over a long history of resistance to racist oppression. That form was not available to me, and it is not available to many Latinas that come to the U.S. from outside the Spanish-speaking Caribbean or Mexico and are political in gender and race terms. There is no diaspora for us. I do see a place for communality for those of us who live at the intersection of several oppressions and who are not diasporic Latinas. I have exercised that form of hopeful communality which moves in the direction of coalition. The boundaries of communities/nations are often tight and designate insiders and outsiders, even though the communities are necessarily permeable, living in the midst of people "not their own." Those communities are also in internal tension. Those non-diasporic Latinas at the intersection of race and gender, understood and treated as outsiders—even though the treatment can be sweet—can see and live boundaries and thus see these circles of life and meaning as directed inward while coalition also needs a directing outwards. Embracing ambiguity is a question of living resistantly in impure communities or in-between impure communities in a society that values purity and individualism. Communities are impure as they are constituted by more than one reality, the reality that creates people instead of subhuman beings, people always in the middle or either/or, a humanity lived and created in affirmation of ambiguity. Assimilation, acceptability, authority all ask us to erase impurity and communalism. So long as you understand our possibilities to lie in them, the erasure of ambiguity has to be your worst life.

***You're also known for your path-breaking work on what you call "the modern colonial gender system." Can you explain it for readers who might be unfamiliar with your work? And why does this concept deserve the attention of today's Latina/o philosophers?***

I have come to understand race, racism, racialization in terms of the human/non-human, not-quite-human dichotomy. Hortense Spillers, Anibal Quijano, Alexander Weheliye have given clarity and strength to race as the violent reduction of humanity to flesh, to animality. My insight is that colonization as racialization was constituted by a gender system in which the gendered human and the non-gendered beasts coexisted in a violent world in which the colonized were dehumanized in every possible way: in terms of sex, of the use of their bodies in labor, their knowledges and cosmologies, their senses of self away from their worlds of interconnected beings. Gender, a particular historical formation, became a mark of the human. To think then of "all women" in universal terms as many feminists have is to fail to take in that dehumanization and to fail to take responsibility for being implicated in it, an implication that is constitutive of the interrelation of whiteness and gender.

**What do you see as the most controversial and contested debate within Latina feminist philosophy circles today?**

The question of identity, including its “gender” form and its tie to reproduction continues to give rise to debate but in a form different from the one it took in the politics of identity. It is not as much about identifying as about being identified by power and whether that is something to negotiate beneficially or something to reject. Sexuality is a contested field as queerness and queer theory, transgender, transsexuality are crossing Chicano-a, Latina-o, and sexuality studies in ways where postmodernity, postpositivist realism, and decoloniality are making for theoretically complex and politically contested positions. The question of the multiplicity of reality and the self, central to my own philosophical position, is also contested. Transnational capital’s violent treatment of transnational labor is perhaps the most important politically and philosophically as it crosses all other forms of oppression.

**Your work has played a pivotal role in shaping the thought of today’s decolonial thinkers. What are some of your current philosophical questions involving the decolonial turn? What questions would you like to see addressed by other Latina/o scholars in the field? What challenges and possibilities do you envisage for future conversations between decolonial thought and more traditional forms of philosophy?**

Can we think of ourselves in cosmologies that affirm interconnection, communality, ambiguity? I think of Gloria Anzaldúa as enacting and expressing a cosmology for the new mestiza. I think this needs praxical thinking, sensing, theorizing possibilities from impurity. The thought of this task came to me as a crossing from Chicana to indigenous Latin America. The decolonial turn needs more attention to sex and gender, as central to the coloniality, and to the meaning and implications of my claim and Oyeronke Oyewumin’s claim that gender is a colonial imposition. Anthropologists continue to claim that there is gender everywhere, without understanding that the issue is conceptual and political. As we move from the colonial reduction to decoloniality, we need to research and study ritual knowledge, non-Eurocentred philosophies, cosmologies, ways of living and relating in the Americas, or *Abya Yala*, as the indigenous movement calls the territory but without borders. We also need to understand whether and in what ways peoples’ meanings, ways of life, relations, self-in-relation have been changed by Eurocentred modern colonial cosmology, philosophy, world-views at every level. This is enormously important work in my own understanding of decoloniality. Particularly at the interpersonal level, I do not see how we can just think that the contemporary ways of thinking and doing of non-white, colonized people are decolonial when interpersonal violence, abandonment, state interference in the organization of communal decision-making, and state neocolonial recognition of only men as decision-makers are part of the weave of contemporary indigenous and afro-descendant life. The challenges for conversation with traditional philosophy and feminist philosophy begin with a recognition that white Anglo and Eurocentred conceptual work is implicated in the coloniality of knowledge and life.

**One of my favorite essays is your 1987 piece, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception.” In a passage that is at once unsettling and liberating, you write: “Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight.” How has this mentality shaped your career as a professor and scholar?**

First, and importantly, it has taken me away completely from trying to establish myself in the field of philosophy. Analytical philosophers, in particular, but not exclusively, do not consider me a philosopher. It has been difficult but understandable. It has also led me to take others, their ways, thoughts, the damages to their humanity seriously without thinking that they have to think like me. The academy is a very hard place for being playful and finding ambiguity a source of wisdom and delight because it is taken for granted as producing non-authoritative, serious, important work or ways of being. So I do not think of myself as a scholar, and I do not think of the academy as my “home.” I do think of myself as engaged, seeing and writing about what I consider important for transforming ourselves from how the oppressive institutions, normative structure see us and treat us into beings that create inward and coalitional understanding of the self-in-relation.

**What does it look like for today’s Latina/o philosophers to make room for surprise and “playfulness” in their teaching and research?**

There are so few Latinas in the profession that it is difficult for me to think of a “today” for Latina philosophers, and philosophy has tended to reject praxical theorizing, so surprise and playfulness have to constitute one’s work at the margins of the discipline. Yet, there are more Latinas in philosophy today than when I became one. Mariana Ortega has created an important time-place for us in the Latina Round Table. Linda Martín Alcoff has made room for Latina philosophers at the APA. Their work has made spaces where a Latina can do philosophy among other Latina philosophers. I have found company across disciplines in the company of other women of color, including Latinas. Surprise and playfulness are not helpful in understanding oppression. They are important in maintaining an understanding that whatever is to be constitutive of thinking otherwise stands at the crossroads of oppressive constitutions of the self-in-relation. Thinking praxically about and in multiple realities is about rethinking modern philosophy’s conception of the human and humanity. Philosophizing praxically is about thinking dangerously and playfully in revealing surprising understandings of ourselves as Latinas in communality.

**What is your next project?**

I am writing a book on decolonial feminism. It is a long process because I know so little about non-Western philosophies. I have spent time in the Andean region in Bolivia and Argentina, read a lot of Caribbean philosophy, and I am spending time as a member of GLEFAS with indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin American, and mestizas. Thinking together has been very important to me. We are creating a space for decolonial feminism.



## Interview with Manuel Vargas

By Carlos Alberto Sánchez  
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

**Manuel, first, I thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. The objective here is to offer readers of our newsletter a snapshot of your philosophical life, including some general observations about your background, your influences, your philosophical journey, and your work.**

**Let's begin at the beginning. Tell me about your first encounter with philosophy.**

I suppose my first experience with philosophy was at the family dinner table. My father had taken some classes in philosophy and theology, and when I was getting full of myself, he would trot out things like Zeno's paradoxes as ways to shut me up. Later, I was remarkably fortunate to go to a big, inner city high school with a wonderful teacher—George Mawson—who thought this group of kids needed to read Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Dostoyevsky, and so on, instead of traditional English literature. He was right. Then, at Bakersfield College, the local community college where I went after high school, I took my first college philosophy classes. I had a number of teachers who influenced me there, including Jack Hernandez and Moya Arthur. I was really taken with the idea that there were classes where the arguments and the contents of the ideas mattered, and where the grade wasn't entirely a function of whether you could write reasonably well.

**The standard narrative when it comes to Latinos in philosophy is that philosophy was not part of "the plan"—that it was never our intention to dedicate ourselves to it. What made you decide to pursue philosophy as a permanent preoccupation?**

Wait—this is permanent? I never thought of philosophy as a permanent preoccupation. It was always something I got sidetracked into doing, and in many ways I still feel that way. Any day now, I'm going to go to law school. Now, though, I probably have to wait until my kids are safely off in college.

What happened, I think, is mainly that I decided that philosophy was the hardest thing I loved doing, and that until I had to get a real job, I could just keep doing it as long as it was interesting and fun to do. Somehow, I kept getting opportunities to keep studying it, and eventually teaching it, just making enough money to keep me from looking for a real job.

**Once there, the record shows that you decided to focus on some hard metaphysical questions such as free will and moral responsibility. Why?**

In college, I had no interest whatsoever in these questions. I recall having had a conversation with a classmate at U.C. Davis, Christian Coons (incidentally, also from Bakersfield and also now a professional philosopher), who was gripped by these things. I told him I thought

they were really uninteresting, and that the real problems were puzzles in metaethics and practical reason. He was dismissive. Naturally, I ended up working on free will and moral responsibility, and he's done some excellent work in metaethics and practical reason.

The thing that surely changed my mind was taking a graduate seminar from Peter van Inwagen at Notre Dame. I eventually transferred graduate programs, but the philosophical issues at the heart of that class stuck with me. In later graduate seminars, I found myself repeatedly returning to questions of free will and moral responsibility, whether the seminar was on Hume, Nietzsche, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, or even political philosophy. So I decided to write a dissertation about these things because it seemed like the best bet for a project that I would tolerate long enough to finish a dissertation.

**Your latest book, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford 2013) seems to sum up your thinking on these issues. Tell us a little bit about what you are aiming to accomplish in that work. (Note: *Building Better Beings* was awarded the 2015 APA Book Award)**

*Building Better Beings* is an attempt to provide a systematic account of the origins of puzzles about free will and moral responsibility, a methodology for doing philosophy in cases where common sense is in conflict with broadly naturalistic commitments, and a positive account of how we should think about moralized blame given some modest skepticism about how we tend to think about ourselves. What it ultimately argues is that we have good reason to praise and blame one another, in roughly the ways that we already do. Crucially, the basis for this isn't an exotic metaphysical property like free will as it is sometimes understood. Instead, the basis is rooted in what such practices, attitudes, and judgments do for us. In particular, the mess of ordinary blaming practices (frequently, "backward-looking" assessments of what people have done sometimes involving assessments of desert), over time, make us better agents of a particular sort. That's the "building better beings" part. In suitably constrained ways, such practices help us do a better job of recognizing and responding to moral considerations. And that's an important part in understanding why these practices aren't vulnerable to many traditional metaphysical worries.

I now think that the book, if it is still read in ten years, will look a bit like a product of a transitional era in the development of work on responsibility that has only recently begun to separate itself from work on free will. The older free will literature was one principally propelled by worries in metaphysics, mind, and agency. Central to it was an attempt to capture some or another privileged notion of ability, and capturing ordinary intuitions tends to figure prominently in that literature. The first part of *Building Better Beings* is an attempt to navigate those issues, and it deals with some methodological headaches that arise from competing conceptions of how to resolve those traditional puzzles.

The second part of *Building Better Beings* is almost exclusively about moral responsibility. It takes up fundamentally normative concerns connected to moral

blame, the nature of moral responsibility, and the kinds of agency it requires. So the second part of the book is really part of a newer literature that tends to be pursued by people grounded in normative theory. Instead of being gripped by mostly metaphysical worries—including what powers we have when we deliberate about what to do, or what it would mean to be a causal origin of things in some deep sense—this newer literature is largely about whether there is an adequate justification for treating each other the way we do when we blame.

I find both sets of questions interesting and profitably undertaken with some understanding of the other. But if I'm right, philosophical work on free will and moral responsibility will become increasingly disconnected, making a book like this an artifact of a transitional period in what came to be two conversations.

***What hard, philosophical questions keep you up at night?***

Philosophy doesn't tend to keep me up at night so much as get me out of bed in morning. The puzzles that get me moving right now are mostly connected to the idea that our moral dispositions are partly products of context, but where those contexts include conditions of structural and material inequality, as well as differences in historical and cultural accidents. On one way of putting it, our agency is porous, and thus our moral ecology matters. So, I want to understand the porousness of our agency better, and what kinds of duties we have for trying to support or construct some moral ecologies and not others. I think this has ramifications for a lot of issues in social and political philosophy—including law, philosophy of race, and political obligations. But these are ideas I'm just starting to kick around.

I'd also love to sit down and just bang out some thoughts I've had for years about a variety of issues in Latin American philosophy, including long-standing (and sometimes tedious) debates about what it is, what it should be, and what it could be. I also think the connection with Latina/o philosophy is super-interesting, and I've been excited by a lot of the work of some junior folks in our field who are writing and talking about these issues.

If I can just get a couple of sabbaticals or leaves lined up to give me an uninterrupted block of time for three or so years, I'll get this done in no time.

***I remember meeting you for the first time in 2002. You were passing through the University of New Mexico where I was a second-year doctoral student, and at that point you were only the second Latino I had ever met with a Ph.D. in philosophy . . . and from Stanford no less! I was in awe that you existed and took it upon myself to make my presence matter to others as yours had mattered to me. I didn't know anything about your work, but the fact that you were there, being philosopher, had a huge impact. What advice do you have for our young Latino readers in regards to their pursuit of the philosophical life?***

Wow—thanks. I hear you, though, about the sense of astonishment, delight, and relief that one is not alone. For me, meeting Eduardo Mendieta and reading Jorge Gracia and Linda Alcoff's work were big moments for feeling like being in the profession didn't always have to be a solo endeavor. I was very fortunate to have a variety of excellent and supportive non-Latina/o mentors. But the sense that I was something necessarily strange or at odds with the profession was diminished when I came into contact with other people who had Latina/o identities that weren't rendered invisible in the ordinary course of professional life.

I like to think things have started to change. Not in terms of some big upswing in numbers, but in terms of what one can find out by making use of an Internet connection. The existence of Latina/o philosophers is no longer completely invisible, and there are some good resources (like the UPDirectory) for locating us. Given this sort of change, I'm inclined to think the right people to ask for advice for younger Latina/o philosophers are people in the pipeline right now—i.e., advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and early assistant professors. These are the folks who will know what people need to hear right now and who can articulate the sorts of challenges and questions for which advice from others might make sense.

From where I sit, which may not generalize very far, one thing that does strike me as a recurring challenge for many of us, I think, is learning the implicit norms of the profession. Everyone faces this challenge, I think, but for students from underrepresented groups, there are more hurdles for easy acquisition of professional norms. I leave the argument for that claim as an exercise for our readers.

At the most basic level, learning professional norms requires that one have some sense of what people are looking for when they are evaluating your work, and how to give that to them. More generally, it has to do with gaining familiarity with the broadly sociological features of the profession, i.e., having a sense of how the game is played, how to pick topics, how to frame one's contributions, where to send work when it is ready to publish, how to find receptive readers, and so on. Too often, this stuff is left mysterious. When it is, we internalize the mysteriousness as a kind of generalized hostility to one or to one's work. If one feels like an outsider, that starts to look like the explanation for one's difficulties in this domain.

I certainly don't mean to suggest that if you understand the intricacies of the sociological dimensions of the profession, you won't be subject to any bias. Bias is a real thing, and it sometimes is the right explanation for why one's experiences are what they are. My point here is only that familiarity with the professional norms does help avoid some headaches and can create some opportunities to get an audience for one's work.

Learning the implicit norms of the profession can be tough, and there are many overlapping groups in philosophy with different answers to what the norms are and what they should be. And, of course, one can be overly strategic about these things in a way that does disservice to one's

work and human relationships. However, my advice to Latina/o philosophers who are still in the early stages of a career is to be explicit with yourself that you want to learn these norms, and then to follow through on learning them.

Alternatively, if you want to reject the norms of the various communities within philosophy, that's fine too. However, ideally, one does this with some knowledge of what is being rejected. In any event, if you want to learn the norms of a given community, this requires identifying folks who know the norms, who can afford to give you and your work some attention, and then trusting them to be honest with you about the gory details. It can take time to cultivate relationships like that, but it is very hard to navigate the weird life of this discipline with no robust sense of what the implicit rules are about what makes for good work, and how individuals, in fact, decide what is worth one's limited time and attention. More concretely, my advice is to ask behind closed doors: ask advisors (mentors, senior figures, and the like) how they think about these things, and how they think other people think about these things. You might initially get some unhelpful answers. Nevertheless, if you pursue these questions with enough people in a context of some trust, you will start to get some "actionable data," as folks in Silicon Valley sometimes say.

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## 2015 ESSAY PRIZE IN LATIN AMERICAN THOUGHT

### *Skillful Coping and the Routine of Surviving: Isasi-Díaz on the Importance of Identity to Everyday Knowledge*

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When we think about the situations in which we are addressed as knowers, we might first think about sharing our knowledge in academic conferences or about contributing to bodies of knowledge through the writing and publication of essays and books. As teachers, we might think about the activities and assignments we give to our students so that they are learning what they should know. These situations, however, are not the most common instances in which we act as knowers. In this essay, I consider the work of two philosophers—Hubert Dreyfus and Ada María Isasi-Díaz—who both hold that the routine activities that make up our everyday lives are, in fact, those in which we most demonstrate our expertise. But while Dreyfus views everyday knowledge as skillful coping, or the intuitive exercise of deeply engrained expertise, Isasi-Díaz argues that for those who are oppressed, such as the impoverished Latinas in New York City who are the focus of her work, everyday knowledge involves the making of deliberate, difficult, character-defining choices. These choices express one's most important values and give definition to the parameters of one's ethical subjectivity.

In this paper, I develop a comparison between Dreyfus and Isasi-Díaz, and I argue that Isasi-Díaz's recognition of the influence of social location on how we know poses an important challenge to Dreyfus's work on the knowledge of the everyday. The paper is not meant primarily as critique of Dreyfus, though. I examine this comparison between Dreyfus and Isasi-Díaz as a means to advance an argument about the relationship between Anglo-American philosophy and Latin American and Latina/o philosophy. Through the comparison, I show that Dreyfus speaks from a particular social location without explicitly recognizing it as such. Consequently, while elucidating the universal experience of skillful coping, Dreyfus does not adequately acknowledge the disruptions to the everyday that is inherent to the oppression that many people face. This oversight does not undermine his theory of skillful coping as a form of everyday knowledge. It is, however, emblematic of the tendency in much of U.S. philosophy to philosophize broadly about human experience without accounting for the different lived experience of those who are socially marginalized.

While the failure of any particular individual philosopher to engage with marginalized cultural or socio-political standpoints may not be philosophically or morally problematic, as a widespread and recurring tendency, it indicates a number of problems. First, theory that is presented as universal, but which obfuscates or systematically ignores the experiences of those who are socially and politically marginalized, has the effect of delegitimizing those perspectives when they differ from those of dominant groups. The denial of the significance of these perspectives makes philosophy complicit in the oppression of these marginalized groups. Second, the failure to engage with these perspectives speaks to a disregard of the ways in which material, intellectual, and social contexts inform philosophy. Yet these contexts play no small role in the ways in which we develop and evaluate philosophical theories and arguments. As Linda Alcoff suggests, theories about the lived human experience "take on their influence, their resonance, their plausibility, their intelligibility, and thus their justification, from their connection to a very particular, rich and complex set of social conditions."<sup>1</sup> To ignore social location, or the context within which particular philosophical ideas are fashioned, is to neglect considerations that are central to philosophical practice.

Latina/o and Latin American philosophy is well positioned to instigate this contextual sensibility in Anglo-American philosophy. One reason, as Manuel Vargas puts it, is that "social and political philosophy, of which discussions about culture, ethnicity, race, and gender all play a part, has been something of first philosophy in much of the various strands of Latin American philosophy."<sup>2</sup> Latin American thought has a long tradition of contextual consciousness. Alcoff specifies: "From *Símon Bolívar* through *Jose Martí* and *José Carlos Mariátegui* to *Enrique Dussel*, among others, we have a 200-year tradition of non-ideal philosophy, considering the questions of goodness, beauty and truth as questions for a very specific amalgam of people in a particular time and place."<sup>3</sup> Latin American and Latina/o philosophy is well poised to enter into dialogue with Anglo-American



philosophy because, as Vargas notes, “Latin American philosophy is clearly a part of the Western philosophical tradition and clearly concerned with similar issues, figures, and methods.”<sup>4</sup> Latina/o and Latin American philosophy shares the heritage of the Western tradition while having also developed a unique philosophical identity. In addition to this shared intellectual tradition, as the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, many Latinas and Latinos also share historical, geographic, cultural, and political space with Anglo-Americans. Latina/o and Latin American philosophers are thus uniquely situated as dialogical partners. It is with the aim of creating a dialogue of this sort that I analyze the work of Dreyfus and Isasi-Díaz here.

Dreyfus’s phenomenology of skillful coping elucidates the ways in which knowledge often takes the form of non-conceptual and spontaneous skillful response. Dreyfus makes this assessment based on the ways in which we experience knowledge in carrying out the activities of everyday life, such as driving to work or walking through a crowded train station. We often consider everyday activities to be mindless precisely because we encounter them so often that we have become experts at carrying them out. Dreyfus’s focus on everyday knowledge serves as a challenge to cognitivists who concentrate on representations, rules, reasoning, and problem solving as the basic processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge. Although Dreyfus acknowledges that we may learn the skills of the everyday through rules and reasons at first, he argues that these rules eventually give way to the more flexible responses of skillful coping, where we need not to reflect on the best course of action or to determine which rule to apply in a given situation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the process of skill acquisition is one in which knowledge moves from conscious cognitive processing to embodied intuitive response.<sup>6</sup> Key to the progression from novice to expert is the idea that as a person develops expertise, she thinks less and less about her course of action. Even as the particularities of the situation change (perhaps, when one is driving, it begins to rain, or perhaps one is driving a vehicle that she is not accustomed to driving), we develop a situation-specific way of skillfully coping that requires little deliberation. This capacity to refine one’s responses to particular situations without much reflection is what “allows the successful intuitive situational response that is characteristic of expertise.”<sup>7</sup>

Like Dreyfus, Isasi-Díaz shows that we gain insight about what knowledge is by focusing on the ways in which we carry out everyday activities. She argues, however, that we ought to pay attention to *whose* everyday we focus on. This is because the *everyday* is not the same for *everyone*. Looking specifically to the experience of impoverished Latinas in the United States, Isasi-Díaz argues that *lo cotidiano*, or the everyday of oppressed Latinas, reveals that the experience of knowledge is determined by the unique content of each individual’s daily life.

For Isasi-Díaz, *lo cotidiano* is the space where we experience everyday life, which always stands as the background to our practices and beliefs. This everyday world is both intimate and mundane, consisting of that which we do day in and day out in order to deal with the reality of our situation.

Isasi-Díaz describes *lo cotidiano* as the “simple reality of our world.”<sup>8</sup> It is simple insofar as it refers to the domain of what happens on a daily basis. She notes, however, that this simple reality is by no means simplistic for the impoverished Latina:

By simple reality I mean the one that we have to urgently tend to, that is dispersed throughout each day, and that we run into whether we want to or not. . . . In short, then, *lo cotidiano* is the reality strung along the hours in a day; it has to do with the food we eat today, and with the subway or bus fare we have to pay today, with how to pay today for the medicine for a sick child or an elderly parent.<sup>9</sup>

Isasi-Díaz reminds us that there are many situations in which going through the motions of everyday life without much reflection is a matter of privilege. Those who are oppressed, however, may find themselves confronting the most mundane aspects of their own everyday lives in a way that requires conscious and deliberate exercises of epistemological agency.

The everyday of the impoverished Latina is one that is routine, but unlike the unreflective routine of those with privilege, this routine is the “routine of surviving,”<sup>10</sup> where one confronts challenges, obstacles, and setbacks of social inequality—“the limitations imposed by the material-historical reality”<sup>11</sup>—and finds herself trying to deal with it. Isasi-Díaz asks us to consider the experience of the routine task of securing transportation, noting, “The dominant group does not have to decide whether to take the bus and pay \$2.25 or walk fifteen blocks in order to have that money to buy food or soap to do the laundry.”<sup>12</sup> Social privilege, or the absence of significant material, social, political, or cultural constraints on one’s everyday living, allows one to experience basic survival in a non-reflective way.

Just as Dreyfus shows the everyday to be the space in which we exercise our expertise, Isasi-Díaz shows that *lo cotidiano*, which involves matters of routine survival, is a space in which oppressed Latinas exercise their own competencies. Unlike Dreyfus’s notion of skillful coping, however, *lo cotidiano* of oppressed Latinas involves a highly reflective coping with the challenges of life. Isasi-Díaz describes a scene she observed on her morning commute to work in which two Latinas collaborated to share a bus fare card in order to be able to afford public transportation. Isasi-Díaz asks us to recognize the thinking that goes into such an exchange: “They have to give it much thought: coordinate schedules, decide who pays for the card, how they are going to keep track of its use, and so forth. On the other hand, for those of us who do not have to worry about how we are going to pay for local transportation, *lo cotidiano* is less demanding, and we hardly pay attention to it.”<sup>13</sup> Isasi-Díaz thus highlights the intelligence inherent in the activities that are often considered banal.

Both Dreyfus and Isasi-Díaz hold the view that the way in which we exercise the knowledge of the everyday has ethical import. For Dreyfus, we exhibit ethical virtue when we demonstrate appropriate spontaneous, unreflected

responses to everyday situations of ethical significance. Similarly, Isasi-Díaz shows that *lo cotidiano* is a space in which an oppressed person defines her character. It is in this domain, Isasi-Díaz writes, that oppressed Latinas “can move with a certain autonomy, take decisions and put them into play—decisions that might seem unimportant but which woven together constitute our ethical and moral horizon.”<sup>14</sup> Unlike Dreyfus, however, it is response to challenges and constraints that Latinas make reflective, difficult decisions and implement strategies. In so doing, they “exercise their moral agency and determine who they are, who they become, and how they live their lives.”<sup>15</sup> Isasi-Díaz describes a scene in which she encounters a woman at the bus stop who, it was apparent, did not have the resources to care well for herself. The woman looked exhausted and dirty, but the woman’s child, who was with her, seemed clean, energetic, and happy. Isasi-Díaz observes that from the time the woman woke up to the time she arrived at the bus stop, “she probably had made half a dozen decisions that impacted her values, her commitments, her responsibilities, and her obligations.”<sup>16</sup> The woman’s oppression is revealed in the necessity of making a choice between her own well-being and that of her child, but this choice was also an exercise of her autonomy and an expression of her values.

Having now considered Dreyfus’s and Isasi-Díaz’s views of knowledge in the everyday, I would like to clarify a few points regarding why I believe Isasi-Díaz’s notion of *lo cotidiano* provides an important challenge to Dreyfus’s phenomenology of skillful coping. First, Dreyfus does acknowledge that we do not all enter into the intuitive mode of skillful coping with respect to the same activities. He recognizes, for example, that one person might be an expert driver while another is a novice. And there is no principled reason why Dreyfus’s view could not account for the influence of social location on the activities that we come to master. If one is part of a social group where owning a car is not possible or not practically necessary, one might not have reason to learn how to drive. Isasi-Díaz, however, is calling our attention to differences in *lo cotidiano* that are due not to a lack of practice, as in the case of the novice driver, but rather to the obstacles that arise in the midst of one’s familiar routine of surviving. A key distinction between Dreyfus’s notion of the everyday and Isasi-Díaz’s notion of *lo cotidiano* is that skillful coping as Dreyfus describes it is apparently acquired through unencumbered, uninhibited, unproblematic, and unproblematized habit formation. This is not to say that developing skills is easy, but rather that within a given lifeworld, one who develops a skill must be able to dwell, for the most part, unobstructed in a space that allows for habit formation. Isasi-Díaz shows that the oppressed Latina does not dwell in the same unproblematized space of habit. To be oppressed on the basis of one’s race and/or gender is to be rendered homeless from all habitats except for that of the oppressor. *Lo cotidiano* is therefore not the space of an unproblematized lifeworld. Instead, it is the space in which the non-reflective gliding along of those with privilege intersects with the struggle of the oppressed, who must resist, contest, and negotiate each of their interactions.<sup>17</sup>

Second, I am not suggesting that oppressed people do not ever experience the non-reflective skillful coping that Dreyfus describes. Dreyfus’s representation of skillful coping does apply to the ways in which all of us experience knowledge at least some of the time, irrespective of our social location. Hence, it may be the case that acquiring groceries for her family has been a matter of the very challenging, deliberate routine of survival for the impoverished Latina, but perhaps, in the moment of cooking dinner, this Latina shifts into the mode of skillful coping, moving intuitively through the kitchen, relying on her embodied expertise in order to recognize the smell of a tortilla over a flame that has just speckled it perfectly with char. While acknowledging the very real exception of those people whose lives are in a state of ongoing crisis, we can probably still presume that even oppressed people have some opportunities to engage in activities of spontaneous, skillful coping. But even if it is the case that skillful coping is the default epistemic mode of the everyday, Isasi-Díaz shows us that *lo cotidiano* is specific to each person, is affected by one’s social location, and reveals disparities in our respective conditions of social privilege and disadvantage.

The third clarifying point is that Dreyfus does recognize the category of the familiar but problematic situation, such as the situation in which one is faced with two equally undesirable choices.<sup>18</sup> These situations are those in which the expert cannot easily determine how to act even though the situation is familiar. Dreyfus says that for the knower in this case, “rather than standing back and applying abstract principles, the expert deliberates about the appropriateness of his intuitions,” developing these intuitions through careful reflection about different aspects of the problematic situation.<sup>19</sup> One might wonder whether *lo cotidiano* of the oppressed person could be classified as the familiar but problematic situation. One consideration that recommends against this interpretation is that even if Dreyfus’s view of everyday knowledge leaves room to account for the problematized reality that oppressed Latinas face, it fails to recognize the social and political underpinnings of these problematized epistemic experiences. In other words, Dreyfus’s work does not account for the ways in which the familiar but problematic situation is a distinguishing feature of the everyday experience of those who are oppressed.

By focusing on the impoverished Latinas she encounters in New York City, Isasi-Díaz emphasizes that *lo cotidiano* is specific to the socially located individual. Approaching the question of knowledge from what is concrete and specific leads us to question universalist conceptions of knowledge that ignore the ways in which members of marginalized groups experience and practice knowledge. Isasi-Díaz asserts, “When *lo cotidiano* enters the academic discourse it is often dislodged from the actual living of the vast majority of people. . . . It is an abstraction that loses its footing in the historical reality of peoples. This is because most of us in the academy often have no contact with *lo cotidiano* of the people, and ours is too different from theirs.”<sup>20</sup> In contrast, Isasi-Díaz develops the notion of knowledge “from the ground up,” an approach that Robert Sánchez, following Guillermo Hurtado, identifies as “applied metaphilosophy,” an approach that is characteristic of much of Latin American

philosophy. Sánchez describes applied metaphilosophy as follows:

In addition to applying philosophy to specific issues, as in applied ethics, and to our personal lives . . . Latin American philosophy also demonstrates how one's circumstances can call for a new and different conception of philosophy. In other words, what the idea of applied metaphilosophy suggests is the possibility that what philosophy is, is determined in part by what it needs to be.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, Isasi-Díaz is explicit that the aim of her work "is not to elaborate and explain our understandings against the background of 'regular' knowledge, using the dominant discourse to validate our insights." Instead, her *mujerista* thought—that is, thought that is carried out from within the community of grassroots Latinas—"seeks adequacy and validation from its usefulness in Latinas' struggles."<sup>22</sup>

This starting place not only distinguishes Isasi-Díaz's thought from Dreyfus's but also characterizes one feature that sometimes distinguishes Latina/o and Latin American philosophy from much of the work that is carried out in Anglophone philosophy in the United States. Beginning with the experiences of Latinas/os sheds critical insight on our most important philosophical questions by accessing those questions from outside of a dominant perspective. Precisely because of its intimacy and mundaneness, *lo cotidiano* of impoverished Latinas is full of concrete manifestations of the unjust social systems within which we live. It consists of routine encounters with racial stigmatization, sexism, economic exploitation, social marginalization, micro-violence, poverty, and lack of access. At the same time, because the daily routine of the oppressed is a confrontation with these limitations, the limitations can serve as "a powerful point of reference from where to begin to imagine a different world"<sup>23</sup>—both politically and philosophically.

Given the differences between Dreyfus's and Isasi-Díaz's philosophical aims, intended audiences, and ideas about everyday knowing, it may still be unclear what is to be gained by putting these two specific thinkers into conversation. Seeing Isasi-Díaz in relation to Dreyfus helps us to better understand her view of knowledge. Although Isasi-Díaz emphasizes the deliberation that is a part of everyday knowledge, it would be a mistake to think of her as a cognitivist. Instead, thinking about everyday knowledge in relation to skillful coping allows us to see that the constant disruptions that characterize the daily routine for the oppressed might be usefully understood in Heideggerian terms as moments of "breakdown," where the world is revealed to the oppressed in ways not rendered immediately available whose everyday life is one of undisturbed, non-reflective skillful coping. By developing the comparison between Dreyfus's notion of the everyday and Isasi-Díaz's *lo cotidiano*, I carry out the intellectual-historical work of locating Isasi-Díaz within the phenomenological tradition and its distinctive approach to epistemology. Doing so helps to demonstrate Isasi-Díaz's achievements not only as a decolonial theorist, Latina feminist, and social epistemologist, but also as a

phenomenologist who elucidates the epistemological, moral, and political richness of apparently simple and mundane actions like buying a cup of coffee or taking a city bus.

The central insight of Isasi-Díaz's work is, of course, that while a focus on *lo cotidiano* allows us to better understand the nature of knowledge, it does so through recognition of the lived realities of *particular* oppressed subjects. One of the dangers of the everyday is, of course, that for those who are privileged, we are likely to overlook it. Isasi-Díaz calls on us to pay close attention to *lo cotidiano* of oppressed others. This recognition not only reveals some of the concrete manifestations of social inequality, but it also makes possible an understanding of knowledge that does not falsify the experience of those who are socially and politically marginalized. By bringing Dreyfus and Isasi-Díaz's work on everyday knowledge into conversation, I hope to have offered an example of one of the ways that Latina/o and Latin American philosophy can enrich the way philosophy is practiced in the United States. As Sánchez puts it, Latin American philosophy can serve "as an external challenge to or disruption of the smooth flow of our tradition," reminding us that our philosophies are a reflection of the place from which we philosophize.<sup>24</sup>

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**NOTES**

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10. *Ibid.*, 54.
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17. I thank Eduardo Mendieta for his insight here, and for helpful comments on a previous draft of this essay.
18. Dreyfus, "What is Moral Maturity?," 13.
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20. Isasi-Díaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 52.
21. Robert Elí Sánchez, Jr., "Strengthening the Case for Latin American Philosophy: Beyond Cultural Resources," *APA Newsletter for Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 6. Sánchez draws from Guillermo Hurtado, *El búho y la serpiente: Ensayos sobre la filosofía en México en el siglo XX* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007), 18-19.
22. Isasi-Díaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 45.
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## ARTICLES

### "Immigrant" or "Exiled"? Reconceiving the *Desplazada/os* of Latin American and Latina/o Philosophy

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#### INTRODUCTION

The philosophical subfields of Latin American and Latina/o philosophy, though connected to one another, have historically dealt with somewhat different sets of concerns. Latin American philosophy has, in very broad strokes, tended to focus on the question of whether a unified and distinctive Latin American identity and corresponding philosophy exist.<sup>1</sup> This tradition responds to shared experiences throughout Latin America of European colonization, and also to the more recent economic and cultural imperialism inflicted upon the region by the United States and other outside forces.

On the other hand, Latina/o philosophy can plausibly be characterized by a focus on issues in immigration justice, Latina/o identity, and the nature of anti-Latina/o racism in the United States.<sup>2</sup> This tradition responds to the unique, racialized experiences of Latin American migrants, as well as those of their children and grandchildren, in the Anglo-normative and white-dominant United States.

Given the unique historical, geographical, and cultural contexts that have shaped Latin American and Latina/o philosophy, respectively, it is unsurprising that the two subfields have engaged somewhat different issues. However, I shall argue in this paper that an ill-defended—and perhaps even philosophically counterproductive—conceptual division exists between the two subfields. This division pertains to the *desplazada/os* of Latin American and Latina/o philosophy.

What is a *desplazada/o*? The term is most widely used to denote a displaced person. According to the *Real*

*Academia Española*, to displace—*desplazar*—is simply to move or remove someone or something from the place in which it, he, or she is. However, a *desplazada/o* is also defined therein as someone who not adjusted to the place in which he or she is. In addition, the term *desplazada/o* can simply be translated to English as "moved." Finally, *to feel desplazado* is to feel out of place. Following these definitions, throughout this essay I shall take the term *desplazada/o* to refer to *people who have moved or who have been removed, and/or who may not feel adjusted to the place where they currently reside.*

I aim to show that *desplazada/os* play a significant role in Latin American and Latina/o philosophy, respectively, and also that exploration of how *desplazada/os* are represented in each of these subfields will illuminate an important misunderstanding. As we shall see, a great deal of prominent Latin American philosophy, poetry, and music depicts Latin American *desplazada/os* as exiles. On the other hand, the *desplazada/os* featured in Latina/o philosophy are generally documented and undocumented (im)migrants, their children, and their grandchildren.

Of course, "Latina/o immigrants" and "Latin American exiles" are not referred to as *desplazada/os* in philosophy or elsewhere; they are referred to as immigrants and exiles, respectively. But many members of both groups share the experience of being pressured to move from their countries of origin and/or of feeling out of place in the countries where they currently reside. I shall argue that the "immigrant-exile distinction," while sometimes useful and important, is often problematic and in some cases philosophically counter-productive. It should be replaced—if not entirely, at least sometimes—by a hemispheric conception of Latin American and Latina/o *desplazada/os*.

This paper is organized as follows. In order to illuminate clearly the immigrant-exile distinction of which I speak, I take as my starting point Carlos Pereda's compelling analysis of exile in his *Los aprendizajes del exilio (Lessons from Exile)*.<sup>3</sup> After explicating key details of Pereda's account of the nature of exile and the philosophical outlook it has inspired in Latin America, I argue that it is difficult to distinguish immigration from exile, on Pereda's view, particularly if we take the term "immigration" to include "undocumented migration" and the term "immigrant" to include "undocumented migrant." Then I argue positively that we should broaden Pereda's account of "the lessons of exile" such that it encompasses the experiences and philosophies produced by Latina/o migrants living outside of Latin America. Furthermore, the philosophy of immigration (including that which intersects with Latina/o philosophy) has lessons to learn from Pereda's theory of exile.

#### CARLOS PEREDA ON EXILE

In his *Los aprendizajes del exilio*, Carlos Pereda offers a series of meditations on the nature of exile with an emphasis on "meta-testimonies" about exile in Latin America, specifically. He opts to focus on the printed words of exiled poets and philosophers as opposed to assessing ethnographic interviews and conversations with exiled people. This is because, he argues, in a poetic



or philosophical “meta-testimony,” the author publicly and willingly offers up to the reader an account of her experiences in hopes that the account will be critically engaged.

Pereda carefully takes the reader through a series of moving, lyric meta-testimonies about exile, such as the words of Gonzalo Millán in the poem *La Ciudad*. This poem was written after the fall of the Unidad Popular in Chile. Says Millán,

*Nos descabezaron.  
Talaron el árbol.  
Nos descuartizaron.  
Trozaron el tronco.  
Cortaron la ramas.*<sup>4</sup>

We hear from the Spanish poet Luis Cernuda, who wrote this of himself and his life in exile:

*Soy español sin ganas  
Que vive como puede lejos de su tierra.*<sup>5</sup>

The Chilean poet Gonzalo Rojas described his life in terms of the following:

*Miro el aire en el aire  
estos años cuántos de viento sucio  
debajo del párpado cuántos  
del exilio.*<sup>6</sup>

Carefully assessing these wrenching “meta-testimonies,” Pereda comes to understand exile both as (1) a *series of phases* and (2) as a *unique philosophical perspective*.

In the first “phase” of exile, the exile experiences her condition as loss. In fact, Pereda claims that the exile *should* feel a sense of loss upon being removed—a loss so profound that it undermines her very sense of self. Pereda argues, however, that this sense of loss should not last forever. The next “phase” of exile is the experience of exile as *resistance*. Exile as resistance entails feelings of anger towards one’s political opponents, but this anger becomes uplifting and potentially productive as the exile slowly reestablishes her selfhood. As Rafael Alberti wrote after being exiled from Argentina, “*La tristeza no es desánimo/ No es negación de la vida.*”<sup>7</sup>

Finally, and most importantly, the exile experiences her *desplazamiento* as a *philosophical threshold*. Pereda argues that “to experience exile as a threshold is to break away from one’s traditional desires, beliefs, emotions, expectations, thereby making the experiences of exile an entryway to other possibilities.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, “one tries to convert these ruptures, these “threshold situations,” into an institutionalized and permanent way of life.”<sup>9</sup> Exile, for Pereda, is not only something to study and learn about, but also a *perspective from within which one philosophizes*.

As we have seen, the majority of Pereda’s “meta-testimonies” are in the form of poetry written by Spanish and Latin American exiles. However, the final chapter of *Los aprendizajes del exilio* is devoted to the

particular philosophical thresholds that were crossed by philosophers María Zambrano and José Gaos. Zambrano and Gaos—both well-known figures of the Latin American philosophical canon—were students of the renowned Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Both were exiled from Spain (eventually to Mexico) as a result of their involvement in certain anti-fascist, Republican activities during the Spanish Civil War. Meanwhile, Ortega y Gasset, though originally an anti-fascist member of the intellectual, artistic, and politically progressive Generation of 1927 circle in Spain (many members of which were themselves forced into exile), went on to diminish his previous condemnation of Francisco Franco’s regime. This led to political tensions between Ortega y Gasset and Zambrano and Gaos.

According to Pereda, these political tensions coincided with significant philosophical “ruptures” between Ortega y Gasset and his famous students. A particularly illustrative philosophical “rupture”—one that appears to emblemize Pereda’s own philosophy of exile (that is, successful achievement of “exile as threshold”)—can be found in the work of María Zambrano. As Pereda explains, several of Zambrano’s more mature philosophical works—such as *El hombre y lo divino*, *El sueño creador*, and *De la aurora*—serve to challenge Ortega y Gasset’s normative and descriptive account of “la razón vital” (or “vital reason”), which depicts reason as universal, technical, and scientific. Zambrano counter-argues that genuine reflection and reason entail a will to start all over again. Indeed, for Zambrano, what we currently regard as stable and universal will soon be dislodged and replaced with an entirely new paradigm. It should come as no surprise, then, that María Zambrano represents for Pereda the full range of philosophical ruptures, thresholds, and possibilities entailed by exile.

To summarize, we have seen that for Pereda, exile is a *philosophical perspective in and of itself*. The exile ideally goes through “phases” in which she experiences exile as loss, sadness, and, finally, as a philosophically inspirational threshold. The exile, in accordance with the later philosophy of María Zambrano and her fluctuating political relationship with Ortega y Gasset, maintains some connection to her origins but ultimately *starts all over again*.

Pereda has offered more than a theory of exile. He has also provided a framework for interpreting a tremendously significant political phenomenon—one that has shaped a great deal of Latin American philosophy, poetry, music, and literature. We have already seen samples of the extensive poetry that has been written by exiles in and from Latin America. Furthermore, Gaos and Zambrano were just two of many famous philosophical exiles (or “*transterrados*”) to Latin America; others include Luis Villoro, Eugenio Ímaz, and Wenceslao Roces, to name a few.<sup>10</sup> In addition, famous cantautores (singer-songwriters) like Caetano Veloso, Mercedes Sosa, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Patricio Manns, and Víctor Heredia—all participants in the much-loved Nueva Canción movement in Latin America—famously composed songs about politics and Latin American identity itself while living in exile.

Given the indisputable philosophical, poetic, musical, and political prominence of exiled Latin Americans, as well



as exiled Spaniards in Latin America, I submit, following Pereda's analysis, that exile is indeed a *philosophical perspective* that plays a prominent role in Latin American philosophy and identity. Importantly, however, it is not customary to count among the exiled those Latin American and Latina/o *immigrants* who live in the United States (and elsewhere).

Indeed, Pereda himself appears to support this distinction. He argues that an exile is someone who is *forced* to leave her country through sanctions, punishments, and threats, while an immigrant is someone who *chooses* to leave her country of origin in the pursuit of a more advantageous situation elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> In the following section, I attempt to undermine this immigrant-exile distinction.

### THE IMMIGRANT-EXILE DISTINCTION

The immigrant-exile distinction is certainly nebulous, and Pereda admits as much at the beginning of *Los aprendizajes del exilio*. This nebulousness becomes particularly clear, so to speak, when we factor in undocumented migration. It is no secret that many poor, undocumented migrants leave their countries of origin to escape poverty and threats of violence.<sup>12</sup> In such cases it is difficult to attribute a robust "choice" to migrate to those who will undoubtedly starve if they remain at home or to female migrants who leave to escape extremely abusive husbands threatening their lives or to young orphans desperately seeking a way to survive and to so many others.

At the same time, one could argue—problematically, but not entirely outrageously—that many political exiles "chose" to take part in the controversial political activities that led to their banishment. My point is certainly not that exiles chose or deserved to be removed, or to blame them for engaging in brave and just actions. Rather, my claim is that any immigrant-exile distinction that is based upon the claim that immigrants, but not exiles, *choose* to leave their countries of origin is difficult to defend at best.

Furthermore, many immigrants experience the "phases" that Pereda claims are constitutive of exile. Immigrants—both documented and undocumented—do sometimes experience a sense of loss in their new countries of residence. And those that left their countries of origin in order to escape violence and poverty may also view their immigration as an act of resistance. Indeed, one prominent social scientist has argued that immigration ought to be construed as an act of assistance to global apartheid.<sup>13</sup> And, finally, immigrants often cross a creative philosophical thresholds and experience Peredian "ruptures" in their new countries of residence. Indeed, the very subfield of Latina/o philosophy is robust evidence of this.

So much, then, for the "immigrant-exile distinction"—or at least the most prominent defense of it. One is now compelled to ask: If the immigrant-exile distinction is so problematic, then why has it been upheld for so long? Here, I believe class-based analysis is helpful. Unlike immigrants (particularly undocumented immigrants), exiles are generally middle- or upper-middle class and have access to prestigious educational and cultural institutions in their countries of origin. Practically all of the exiles considered

by Pereda—and all of the *trasterrados* of twentieth-century Mexican philosophy—fall into this category.<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, undocumented migrants tend to be poor/working class, and when their voices are represented in the popular media, it tends to happen in the form of protest banners and soundbites on behalf of immigrant rights rather than in the form of celebrated poetry, music, and philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

A nationality-based analysis of the immigrant-exile distinction would be helpful as well. It is noteworthy that "exiles" tend to come from South America and Spain, while Central Americans fleeing dictatorships and political violence tend to be labeled "refugees."<sup>16</sup> Clearly, further intersectional analysis of the immigrant-exile distinction that explores the relevant class, social status, geographical origin, race/ethnicity, and perhaps even gender dynamics at play is called for. For our present purposes, allow me to suggest that class and nationality-based perceptions, at the very least, may explain the popularity of the immigrant-exile distinction.

### TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF DESPLAZADOS

Given that (1) the immigrant-exile distinction is difficult to defend; (2) class and nationality-based perceptions may be problematically upholding the immigrant-exile distinction; and (3) exiles tend to be depicted prestigiously as individual philosophers, song-writers, and poets, while immigrants are depicted as rather silent members of an oppressed social group whose voice comes alive in protest, not philosophy, I contend that philosophers ought to be wary of the widespread tendency to distinguish Latina/o "immigrants" from Latin American "exiles." Furthermore, there are good reasons to speak instead in terms of Latin American and Latina/o *desplazada/os*.

The first reason for this is that the term *desplazada/os* is, in at least some cases, more descriptively accurate. We have already seen that the immigrant-exile distinction is difficult to defend. But the proposed alternative term *desplazada/o* can capture what appears to be most morally significant about the experiences of exiles and immigrants (at least those immigrants who are undocumented, or who otherwise leave their countries of origin under duress). That is, the term *desplazada/o*, as defined at the outset, can capture the phenomenon of being pressured to leave the place one currently inhabits in a gravely unjust manner. This is a morally significant experience that many immigrants and exiles share.

In addition, the term is sufficiently broad to include not only first-generation Latin Americans in the United States, but also their descendants. This is because, as we have seen, the term also signifies feeling "uprooted" and somewhat ill at ease in one's surroundings. Thus, the Chicana/o who saw the border cross her and her family may be a *desplazada/o* if this political shift leaves her feeling out of place on her own land in a white-dominant, Anglo-normative society.

Apart from increased descriptive accuracy, there are at least two additional philosophical reasons for adopting a hemispheric understanding of Latin American and Latina/o *desplazada/os* in place of the immigrant-exile distinction. First, inasmuch as the project of unifying Latin American and

Latina/o philosophy is worthwhile, adopting a language of *desplazamiento* will provide additional resources to achieve this.<sup>17</sup> The more broadly understood Latin American and Latina/o philosophical tradition offers varied philosophical responses to *desplazamiento*. Indeed, this broad tradition features work on immigration justice, Latina/o identity in Anglo-normative society, the project of defending and articulating Latin American identity under the weight of imperialism and colonialism, etc. The consolidation of such projects under the rubric of Latin American and Latina/o *desplazamiento*—even if only occasional and strategic—may provide significant opportunities for philosophically rich dialogue and exchange.

Second, the hemispheric focus on *desplazamiento* advocated here will enable philosophers working on exile to learn from those who are working on immigration and *vice versa*. For instance, immigration philosophers can learn from Pereda's efforts to philosophize carefully on the basis of the printed words of his *desplazada/o* subjects. In a similar vein, rather than regarding immigrant *desplazada/os* as philosophically silent participants in the social phenomena of documented and undocumented migration, immigration philosophers should regard the words of Latina/o immigrants (those that are found not only in philosophy, but also in protest and song, media interviews, and ethnographies) as philosophically inviting material. Philosophers of exile, meanwhile, can learn from the attention that immigration philosophy has paid to concerns of race/ethnicity and class in relation to immigration justice. This should compel them to interrogate the category of "exile" as problematically privileged and incomplete.

I propose, then, a new category of Latin American and Latina/o *desplazada/os* that will replace—at least sometimes—the problematic immigrant-exile distinction that currently divides Latin American and Latina/o thought. Once again, the category *desplazada/o* refers to those people who have been moved or removed from the place that they originally inhabited and/or who feel out of place where they currently are. The Latin American and Latina/o philosophical traditions feature a great deal of resources for evaluating *desplazamiento*. Rather than remaining divided by the immigrant-exile distinction, philosophies from both subfields should be put into dialogue with one another in order to produce a creative, hemispheric approach to *desplazamiento* that is philosophically, and perhaps even politically, productive.

NOTES

1. A few examples include Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "The Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Eduardo Mendieta, *Globalizations, Latinamericanisms, and Critical Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Ofelia Schutte, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Leopoldo Zea, *The Latin American Mind* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).
2. An excellent discussion of Latina/o identity in the United States can be found in Linda Alcoff Martín, *Visible Identities, Race, Gender and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and in Jorge J. E. Gracia (ed.), *Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). For examples of the linkages between Latina/o philosophy and

immigration philosophy, see Natalie Cisneros, "Alien Sexuality: Race, Maternity, and Citizenship," *Hypatia* 8, no. 2 (2013): 290–306; José Jorge Mendoza, "Discrimination and the Presumptive Rights of Immigrants," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 2, no. 1 (2014): 68–82; and Grant J. Silva, "On the Militarization of Borders and the Juridical Right to Exclude," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2015).

3. Carlos Pereda, *Los aprendizajes del exilio* (México, DF: siglo xxi editores, s.a. de c.v., 2008). This and all forthcoming translations from Spanish to English are my own.
4. *Ibid.*, 52. Translation: "The cut our heads off. They chopped down the tree. They cut us to pieces. They chopped the trunk. They cut the branches."
5. *Ibid.*, 77. Translation: "I am a Spaniard without motivation. Who lives as he is able to far from his land."
6. *Ibid.*, 83. Translation: "I look at the air in the air. These – how many? – years of dirty air under – how many? – eyelids of exile."
7. *Ibid.*, 60. Translation: "Sadness is not despondency/It is not a negation of life."
8. *Ibid.*, 76.
9. *Ibid.*
10. For excellent, further discussion of the role of the "transterrados" in Latin American philosophy, see Carlos Pereda, *La filosofía en México en el siglo XX: Apuntes de un participante* (México, D.F.: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2013).
11. Pereda, *Los aprendizajes del exilio*, 12.
12. See, for instance, Ann Aurélie Lopez, *The Farmworker's Journey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
13. For a version of this argument see David Spener, *Clandestine Crossings: Migrants and Coyotes on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
14. Once again, for further discussion see Carlos Pereda, *La filosofía en México en el siglo XX: Apuntes de un participante*.
15. For further discussion of representations of Latina/o immigrant rights activists in the United States, see Cristina Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
16. For further discussion of Guatemalan refugees in the United States, see Patricia Foxen, *In Search of Providence: Transnational Mayan Identities* (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2007).
17. For a very detailed and recent discussion of the connections between Latin American and Latina/o philosophy, see the May 2014 issue of the *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* (Volume 5, Issue 1), edited by Adriana Novoa and Andrea J. Pitts. Another important discussion of the "unification" of Latin American and Latina/o identity can be found in Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2000).

*Gilles Deleuze and Gloria Anzaldúa: A Matter of Differences*

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INTRODUCTION

Latin@ philosophy is as varied as who produces the scholarship. For my own work, I have focused on an unlikely pairing: Gilles Deleuze and Gloria Anzaldúa. This pairing transgresses normative expressions of decoloniality and

challenges the legitimacy of continental philosophy in conversation with women of color philosophy, particularly Latina feminist philosophy. It is, in many ways, a modality of nomadism that motivates this unlikely pairing to produce a radical politics of differences that truly matter.

In order to theorize effectively, I bridge together the work of Deleuze with Anzaldúa, a particular commitment to a politics of difference that disrupts our normative horizons. We do not often put continental theory together with decolonial thinkers. To some, this move would be in opposition to decolonial thinking, but I argue that the pairing of Deleuze and Anzaldúa produces a notion of radical difference that is compatible to both thinkers. The fruit of this pairing helps illustrate the philosophical foundation that grounds Anzaldúa's theories.

I first wish to begin with an analysis of Deleuze and detail his concept of difference. I call this the first matter of difference in itself. Reading Deleuze prompts the thinker to recognize the differences that are existing on multiple sides of the plane of thought. Difference is always *del otro lado*<sup>1</sup> of the other side. It is always different *and* difference. Following, and by way of utilizing "difference," I shift to the Chicana feminist/queer feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa. I do this for two reasons: 1) Anzaldúa provides a theoretical and schematic approach to difference, and 2) I wanted to see what yielded when Gilles Deleuze was put into conversation with Gloria Anzaldúa and Gloria Anzaldúa in conversation with Deleuze; this is a tender approach and is not uni-directional. This connectivity between the two thinkers creates an infinity of returns, always differentiating in each turn and in each return. It is, if you will, a matter of differences to see these two figures "cross" over in thought, or collide in thought, always materializing a new contour of difference. These difference always materialize *del otro lado*. When this collision occurs, a rupture in thought also takes place and a "third" plane of consistency emerges. It is, if you will, a plane of immanent borderlands that are always becoming. I use the term "third" (and place in quotes) because it is an attempt to articulate the multiplicity of planes that are always becoming. Borderlands, in the work of Anzaldúa, are always multiple, always plural, and never static. The number three moves beyond the binary of two and the singularity of one and transgresses the zero sum of the negation of borderlands existing. Never could this intersection of theories and thought be a moment of repetition or conformity, singularity or nothingness. It is, perhaps, moments of difference and multiplicity that meet on a plane of immanence, to use Deleuze's words. Or, it is the "crossing over," and the becoming *nepantlera* in Anzaldúa's terms. Whatever the language that emerges, these two scholars meet at critical intersections (or borderlands) and their webbing engages the other to produce something different; it is a matter of material differences which are becoming, in flux, and always shifting between the plurality of the material worlds that exist.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of differences in their writing, it is encouraging to see Anzaldúa use the first person, the "I." Deleuze, however, uses the third person, "we." What you will read in this brief analysis is a mixing of the two, a collision of the autobiographical and the distant third person. I will

privilege the auto, the self, in this analysis, and will also look to Deleuze for ways not to eclipse the self, but expand the self into its multiple or multiplicity.

## DELEUZE AND DIFFERENCE: THE FIRST MATTER OF DIFFERENCE IN ITSELF

When I began *Difference and Repetition*, I began with chapter three. After all, the introduction indicates that the "image of thought" and what was detailed in chapter three would prove significant for the rest of the book, namely, the ability to avoid the act of conforming by recognizing the act of presuppositions—their act and significance. Even in Deleuze's warning to avoid presuppositions, I notice that it is in the plural, the many.

I opted to begin my journey in understanding this book as a point of departure for understanding difference. What this chapter does is urge philosophy (and the reader, too) to abandon presuppositions, to abandon the multiplicity of one's thinking that is tied to the logic of linearity. Doing this creates an advent of sorts, an ability to abandon common sense and relinquish the act of conforming and the stabilizing tendency of recognition, which then ushers in elements of difference. I waited and read to encounter this advent.

Deleuze enlightens the reader when he says, "the form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities."<sup>3</sup> It is here that I am challenged to abandon the Western socio-analytic notion of the standard and embrace difference without any type of standard understanding of what difference might or might not be, or even what difference might become. It is here in this chapter that Deleuze engages the matter of difference not by form or kind, for that would be the starting place of presuppositions, but rather he engages difference as a matter of and in itself. It is not in one instance that difference is recognizable or can be recognized.

Difference is a matter in itself, free from the standardizations of form and conformities and unrecognizable. Difference is the result of abandoning one's own presuppositions and stepping into the unknowing of difference—the unknown and unknowing. In this sense, then, difference carries with it an epistemological feature (or several) in that it challenges standard notions of knowing and knowledge which then, or as a result, produces its own set of epistemic realities. One such example is Deleuze's statement:

They crush thought under an image which is that of the Same and the Similar in representation, but profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement. The thought which is born in thought, the act of thinking which is neither given by inattentness nor presupposed by reminiscence but engendered in its genality, is a thought without image. But what is such a thought, and how does it operate in the world?<sup>4</sup>

The chapter is titled "An Image without Thought," but here Deleuze inverts or reverses the terms, thereby signifying difference as a matter in and of itself. Here I wish to highlight the epistemological reality of a thought born in thought—the production of thinking points toward an epistemological rupture, perhaps, instead of a thought born of a presupposition. For when one thinks or gives birth to a thought which then births another thought, this sequence is not derived from presupposition, but rather stems from epistemic gaps and ruptures. It is difference as a matter of significance here, and an image without a thought takes precedence only after one's substantive commitment to giving birth to the differences in thought, opposed to the images that perhaps shape thought, or even narratives which capture one's thinking. It is here, too, that the matter of difference takes a new shape when one moves to recognize the elements of action relative to thinking. Giving birth to thought motivates elements of difference, which are sometimes seen or captured in action. These actions, then, help one recognize the differences in which one engages, and these actions fail to repeat themselves in the same fashion; the return is never a return of the same, but it is a return of difference. The repeatability of actions are captured in the ongoing giving birth to thought, which is a matter of difference in itself. Actionable repetition is always difference maximized beyond presuppositions.

## BECOMING NEPANTLERAS AS DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION

When I read Gloria Anzaldúa, I am taken into a realm of thinking that forces me to abandon all notions of Western rationality. Though she read Kafka, Nietzsche, Sartre, and the "other heavy duty guys,"<sup>5</sup> Anzaldúa paid careful attention to the philosophy which was emerging or rupturing within her own body. Anzaldúa does not privilege the linear or even the rational, some would say. In fact, there is an ongoing commitment to embrace the multiple over against the singular when engaged in Anzaldúan Thought. Anzaldúa maintained a commitment to the plural, to the differing Other; this should not be overlooked.

While abandoning Western rationality is the struggle of my very rooted Western self (Western, U.S. Mestizaje self), I am able to engage Anzaldúa's theories differently or with a commitment to difference that holds together in complicated ways the long history of Western rationality, continental thought, and the indigeneity of Anzaldúa. While her theories are thoroughly and complicatedly pieced together to reflect her commitment to indigeneity and the multiplicity of knowing, I enter into a transgressive space, theoretically. Or, perhaps, I enter into an interstitial space and place that is neither/nor Western and yet both/and becoming. A space that is in between the rationality of Western thought and the epistemological ruptures that Anzaldúa's work initiates or provokes. I become a nepantler@, an in/between being that is unrecognizable, in Deleuze's terms, and whose starting point is before and beyond presuppositions, or at the place of the threshold of becoming. Becoming a nepantler@ is an image without thought. The nepantler@ is dis/membered, is different and free from presuppositions, and the cycle of becoming nepantler@ is also pieced with a re/membering,

repetitive but always different in its repetition. Becoming (a) nepantler@ and the period of dis/memberment always ushers in the repetition of re/membering. One is re/membered and put back together albeit differently. The repetition of re/membering is the process of engaging the epistemic limits of one's own rationality. For me, it is the limits of my own Western understanding and the epistemological gaps that I am unable to engage, ones that require presuppositions. Anzaldúa at times bridges some of these gaps with her move to inclusion, but oftentimes I am left dis/membered and my dis/memberment is repeated in my becoming (a) nepantler@.

So Nepantla is a way of reading the world. You see behind the veil and you see these scraps. Also it is a way of creating knowledge and writing a philosophy, a system that explains the world. Nepantla is a stage that women and men, and whoever is willing to change into a new person and further grow and develop, go through. The concept is articulated as a process of writing; it is one of the stages of writing, the stage where you have all these ideas, all these images, sentences and paragraphs, and where you are trying to make them into one piece, a story, plot or whatever it is all very chaotic. So you feel like you are living in that mist of chaos. It is also a little bit of an agony you experience. My symbol of that is Coyolxauhqui, the moon goddess, who was dismembered by her brother Huitzilopochtli. The art of composition, whether you are composing a work of fiction or your life, or whether you are composing reality, always means pulling off fragmented pieces and putting them together into a whole that makes sense. A lot of my composition theories are not just about writing but about how people live their lives, construct their cultures, so actually about how people construct reality.<sup>6</sup>

Becoming (a) nepantler@ is a threshold cycle, and the metaphor one can use could be a woman's menstrual cycle. The body adapts to a new month, the body responds to ovulation, and the menses begin and do so out of repetition, but this cycle is always different, yielding multiple differences that are always material and relative to the particularity of the body. Anzaldúa, victim of the early onset of menses and afflicted with a hormonal issue, creates a philosophy of materialism by using the socio-analytic category of the body. Different bodies rupture and emerge out of (a) different body that is the self and other, always in a worlding that is becoming. This philosophy, *Nepantla*, is a system of different and repeatable thought that calls forth the differences found in the multiplicity of one's cycle, one's thought cycle. Stemming from multiple images and thinking processes, *Nepantla*, becomes in chaotic mist, a hydrating reality of difference becoming different. Therefore, becoming (a) nepantler@ demands attention to the chaotic mist and a connection to one's material body, and one's orientation out of one's body.

## DIFFERENCE AND MULTIPLICITY

The question of difference and multiplicity is one that manages to point toward differences in itself. Deleuze



features an account of multiplicity in *A Thousand Plateaus: Schizophrenia and Capitalism*, and it is there that I discovered the plurality of the continuous differences that is referred to as multiplicities and rhizome(s). I should also note that Anzaldúa theorizes multiplicities in the form of plurality when she speaks of spiritual mestizaje in an interview.

What multiplicity offers difference is a *real* way to be something other than a sequential and linear result. Rhizomes are the actual and theoretical framework for Deleuze's multiplicity (his difference), and this multiplicity crosses over both human and animal realities and is a renaturalization of philosophical multiples, or the multiplicity of philosophy in a naturalistic manner.

While Deleuze and Guattari offer their readers the organizing principle of the rhizome as a means of understanding multiples and multiplicities, Gloria Anzaldúa privileges plurality in her complicated (and "unstable") subject position of the mestiza. Plurality becomes the framework through which we come to understand Anzaldúa. Plurality is always relative to differences that are subject to one's body—her body, certainly—but also key to coming to understand the many and various ways that her plurality is part of the work that she does. If one takes her body, for example, there becomes issues of plurality: her differences that then inform her being, becoming, and production. While this "trinity" of thought is born from images and narrative, this plurality of being and becoming in Anzaldúa is what is multiplied (or exponentialized) throughout her work. It is the concrete reality of differences and multiplicity in Anzaldúan thought and theory—her insistence on plurality—that moves readers into the intellectual (and activist) space of multiples. This can be compared to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome and one can see where Anzaldúa's plurality (her differences and multiplicities) fits closely into a notion of rhizome. When one piece of the plural self is lobbed off by society, like a colony of ants, another line emerges.

Anzaldúa speaks of the plurality of the self as a different self in several places in her work, but one that seems particularly fitting for this essay, and especially relative to Deleuze's work, is Anzaldúa's "Yoga of the Body." Highlighted in a book of interviews, Anzaldúa speaks of herself in terms of doubling and tripling; she is multiplied as she is picking fruit. She dates this event as a childhood event. Anzaldúa knew of her engaged multiplicity at an early age. Was the rhizome affecting her even in those moments as a young child? Was she afflicted with the plurality of selves even as she was growing into her childhood self? And what was multiplied when she emerged as an adult? Does this mark moments of difference and multiplicity relative to her body's relationship with the world, the earth, and community? Could Anzaldúa's body, and particularly her "Yoga of the Body," be a way to understand the rhizomatic elements of Deleuze and Guattari? That, while Deleuze and Guattari seem to be speaking about a material reality and theoretical framework, they do not unite rhizome to the body, understood as the material reality. When Anzaldúa is intersected with rhizome, the body becomes the locus (and perhaps space) where rhizome is and becomes. Deleuze's difference and multiplicity, however abstract for some, should not be dismissed, because a closer reading will

unmask the real immanence of rhizomatic and potential of the body's enfleshing rhizomatic realities. I think here of Merleau-Ponty's "phantom hand" as a way to imagine the immanence of rhizomes. Anzaldúa's work helps to complicate rhizome in the body of the human's mattering existenc and could be interpreted as a phenomenological account of the rhizome intersecting with the body.

## EXPRESSIONISM, DIFFERENCE, AND THE PLANE OF IMMANENCE

The expression of difference, for Deleuze and Guattari, is always located on the plane of consistency. The expression of difference for Anzaldúa is always in terms of the plurality of one's self, and its ambiguity both to self and other. Both thinkers privilege an ontological plurality of the self. What is a remarkable intersection of these scholars and their theories is how they all privilege a sense of the immanent relative to their understanding of difference.

Detailed in a book-length project titled *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze performs a genealogy of expression in Spinoza's work, particularly in his *Ethics*. While I utilize Deleuzean language in the heading of this section, it should not be limited to Deleuze himself. Anzaldúa herself deployed notions of expressionism and difference in her work. For example, in her 1987 classic text *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she claims a certain expressionistic stature in her call to understand difference within the conceptual framework of borderlands. They are, she writes, psychic, physical, sexual, and so forth; an expression of difference existing on a plane of immanence. Deleuze writes, "to explicate is to evolve, to involve is to implicate."<sup>7</sup> Positioning these two authors together to explore expression unmasks their very *complicated* attributes: Anzaldúa's expression of the body and mind and nature and Deleuze's expression of the infinite and finite. Both of these entail attributes that are expressed before and after themselves. The borderlands express a very complicated terrain for the body and mind (though this should not be interpreted as Anzaldúan dualism for she escapes the Cartesian divide by deploying a unified plurality of the self, though complicated subject existing in the borderlands). Here complication should be understood as Deleuze details it in *Expressionism*. It is, in fact, the multiplicity of difference in the One that leads to the Many. Anzaldúa, while detailing the One is always and constantly referring to the Many. Furthermore, this One is always existing on the plane of immanence with the Many, and also situated at complicated intersections that are proliferating differences and multiplicity. It is, perhaps, a plurality of selves existing in and on a plurality of borderlands that are not necessarily located in one space and place. After all, Anzaldúa does claim that borderlands exist whenever two or three differences meet, where intersections create a webbing of interconnectivity. These differences collide with one another, rub and irritate one another, and before a scab can emerge, a third space/place becomes a plural space/place. This is constantly happening because we are always expressing our complications to one another; borderlands are always becoming. When these complications meet, a third space/place emerges with its own expression and attributes. Noticing that ideas and bodies collide out of expression, I cannot help but realize



that this movement of bodies is the apparatus that fuels not only the expression but also the differences existing on the plane of immanence. Expression is not far from the plurality of selves that exist in and at the intersections (or borderlands) of evolution and involvement.

## CONCLUSION

What I sought to accomplish in this essay is an account of difference as difference in itself—always on the other side of difference, or *del otro lado*. In many ways, *del otro lado* is the primary orientation of Latin@s, always existing on the other side of race, class, sex, gender, and sexuality. To do this work, I deployed my understanding of Deleuze's work in three different books and utilized the narratives (in the use of interviews) of Gloria Anzaldúa where she also incorporates a great deal of theorizing. What this essay is not is an exhaustive or systematic look at the ways in which these scholars develop difference. I took a thematic approach to difference as a matter of difference in itself. I positioned two scholars side by side and unmasked the similarities of their thought and points where they may depart from one another, but in their departure of one another they are compelled, or at least their theories are compelled, to return to one another because they exist on a plane of consistency, a plane of immanence that is rooted in radical expression, and a plurality of multiplicity. The importance of this work relative to Latin@ philosophy is to illustrate the foundation of difference that exists in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. These scholars manage to create a complicated way of considering difference, one that should be explored further for their political import and ways that social transformation can be achieved from the place of different subject positions that are rooted in a plurality of multiplicity. Here I utilize both Deleuze and Anzaldúa in the phrase: plurality of multiplicity. I could marshal together two other phrases that put these two scholars together on the same plane: "yoga of the body" and "rhizome." The practice of rhizomatic yoga positions bodies of plurality in connection with the fast growing couchgrass of Deleuze and the multiple extensions of yoga for Anzaldúa.

What I believe I uncovered is the complicatedness of these theories that often goes unnoticed. We oftentimes fail to recognize multiplicity in an effort of affirming diversity. Likewise, we often fail to respond to the plurality that is before us because we search for the unified self or theory. What I think Deleuze and Anzaldúa both offer thinkers of today is a way to think about the plurality of differences which exist not on an even plane of consistency, but on a rhizomatic plane of consistency. It is in the rhizome, or the borderlands, that the plurality of differences are most readily recognized.

Found in her narratives, Anzaldúa readily called for us all to imagine the plurality of ourselves that are always located on the other side of *del otro lado*. Positions and sides are important when one is talking about intersections. Oftentimes, pejorative "sides" are erased when the plurality of reality cannot exist. What Anzaldúa initiates in her narratives is the matter of choice and difference that is always emerging from one's own matter, one's one body. Likewise, Deleuze challenges his readers to have an image without a thought and a thought without an image.

Equally located or tied to the mattering body, both scholars urge us to imagine differences without or separated from presuppositions. If this is accomplishable, then difference grows like couchgrass, according to Deleuze, or our limbs stretch out into infinity, according to Anzaldúa. It will grow like couchgrass regardless, but its effectiveness will be difference in itself if we are able to engage such couchgrass from our place of pre/supposition. This is the place of *Nepantla*, the place where the body and mind and nature are dis/membered and acts of knowing practices are located in gaps and fissures, the productive place for epistemological ruptures to emerge and irrupt our realities. This is oftentimes an unrecognizable episode in the process of plurality and multiplicity. While this is a cyclical event of difference and repetition, it is also an event of pluralizing differences. Engaging Deleuze with Anzaldúa thus helps unmask the repeatability of pluralizing differences.

The importance of this work for Latin@ philosophy is to mobilize *del otro lado* as a primary onto-epistemological frame that impacts our ethics. Theorizing (or thinking) from the other side, from the side of difference, is always at the intersection of race, class, sex, gender, sexuality, and ability. Becoming (a) *Nepantler@* is always a difference in process of becoming multiple or plural. And this becoming is always rooted in the ontic realities of difference.

## NOTES

1. Translation: The other side. This phrase is seen in the life and work of Gloria Anzaldúa.
2. While I do believe that both Anzaldúa and Deleuze affirmed monism, both of their monisms are motivated by the language of plurality. And so, while there are plural worlds for Anzaldúa (spiritual, psychic, sexual, and otherwise), the same is true for Deleuze, but he avoids the language of spiritual in his philosophy. I do not think this avoidance suggests any sort of singularity of worlds for Deleuze. It is all radically material for them both, but their language is different, not in opposition.
3. Gilles Deleuze, translated by Paul Patton, *Difference and Repetition* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 134.
4. *Ibid.*, 167.
5. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, California: Aunt Lute Books), 277.
6. *Ibid.*, 276-77. In the 4th edition of *Borderlands*, an interview is included where Anzaldúa talks about (and candidly so) *Nepantla* as philosophy, but as a material philosophy of producing writing. *Nepantla* signifies the production of thought from images.
7. Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism is Philosophy: Spinoza*, translated by Martin Joughin (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2005), 16.

## *Existentialism for Postcolonials: Fanon and the Politics of Authenticity*

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The former slave, who can find in his memory no trace of the struggle for liberty or of that anguish of liberty of which Kierkegaard speaks, sits unmoved before the young white man singing and dancing on the tightrope of existence

– F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*<sup>1</sup>

Historically, one seminal theme in existential thought and literature has been the individual's recovery from alienation, where one's sense of estrangement (from oneself or others) can be traced back to a prior disjuncture between the social norms and values one pre-predicatively inhabits and the embodied, lived experience of those norms in the course of everyday life. For the modern subject—who relies on a reflexive understanding of herself as a distinct individual in culture, as a whole person within a life story—the subsequent inability of her social world to do justice to the phenomenological complexity of individual experience can thus yield states of generalized detachment, social anomie, enunciated paralysis, and, of course, self-estrangement. The existential problem of alienation and the individual's struggle for a more authentic sense of self is thereby fueled by the effluvial intuition that “unbeing dead isn't being alive,” as e.e. cummings put it. To be me, I must become who I am. But to do that, I must first understand who I have been made to be and how that shapes the contours of my difference.

In the context of Latin America, Africa, and other historical settings shaped by European colonialism, the problem of authenticity and recovery from alienation is far more intricate. As a generation of Black and Latin American existential thinkers—ranging from Frantz Fanon to Leopoldo Zea—have shown, in the postcolonial context, there is no one-to-one (or, at minimum, unproblematic) relation between culture and individual identity, as social norms have been shaped by the forced and violent importation of foreign normative frameworks (with which experience is conceptualized to begin with). On this view, alienation is, in large part, brought on by violence done to the very structures of experience with which one's “humanity” is actively produced—and which is the starting point for the problem of authenticity in the Western European existential tradition. As Fanon points out, working one's way out of alienation when one is a dehumanized object that is not yet even an alienated subject is an epistemically and phenomenologically daunting task, one which often leads to madness or breakdowns in identity, even physical violence. How nice that your life was measured out with coffee spoons, Fanon might say—that your alienation shows up as *such*, and your dissatisfaction registers as a language with meaningful questions others can recognize as emanating from a whole self within a life story: an alienated self, but a *self* nonetheless. In the picture Fanon

paints, one is not yet even a “not yet” (*noch nicht*) that is running forward and projecting into future possibilities in the face of death while drawing on a historical horizon of meaning that runs ahead of our ahead-ness, laying pavers of possibilities to secure the articulative footing of our worldly experiences. No. If that historical horizon is of a world that *shatters worlds*, that discloses the articulative possibilities of some worlds precisely by covering over others, the historical “humanity” of the colonized subject cannot be disclosed, since there is too much internal contradiction in those allegedly shared contexts of significance definitive of Being-in-the-world. This helps explain why Fanon writes, “I will say that the black *is not a man*. There is a *zone of nonbeing*, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval *can be born*. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.”<sup>2</sup> Authenticity is a mere possibility for authenticity, no more, not now. And it will require a daunting double, perhaps triple, movement to effectively move towards liberation from structural, epistemic, and epidermal conditions of alienation. It will require nothing short of “a restructuring of the world” that the existentialist tradition brackets out as inessential to living the examined life.<sup>3</sup>

Fanon's treatment of the problem of alienation in *Black Skin, White Masks* is a critical moment in existential thought that is often subordinated to psychoanalytic and political readings of the text in mainstream disciplinary discourses. His direct references to Nietzsche, Marcel, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Jaspers are often overlooked in favor of critical takes on Hegelian recognition, or as a foil to the unraced bodily comportment and corporeal schema worked out in the European phenomenological tradition. While these are keen readings, revisiting Fanon's seminal contribution to *decolonial existentialism*, as I call it, may prove helpful in raising the visibility of Latina existentialism as a rich philosophical tradition that, like counterparts in Black and African existentialism, is responsive to the crises of signification and catastrophes of meaning stemming from intersectional lived experience. This is undoubtedly a brief and incomplete sketch of the kinds of problems identified through a decolonial reading of a historical feature of existentialism; a different set of concerns could be put forth in Fanon's work with regard to the visibility of black women's struggles in their phenomenological specificity.

As a point of entry into the discussion, I draw on Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity* for its nuanced account of the existentialist view of authenticity, as it avoids the pitfalls of the masculinist, radically anthropocentric reading of authenticity (as egoistic individualism) that prevailed in the mid-late twentieth century. While there are many contemporary explicators of the subject, I also draw on Taylor because he is perhaps the least unattuned to multicultural imperatives and thus better suited for comparative readings alongside Fanon. His wide readership and clear, crisp writing easily militate against straw-manning his position as myopic on questions of race, gender, and sexual difference so that at first glance, in reading Taylor, we seem to have a white ally who has thought deeply and carefully about the politics of recognition and voiced the significant problem of structural inequalities that continue to elide the moral

force behind that politics. But reading him through Fanon also reveals some difficulties that are paradigmatic of the kinds of problems *Fanon* identifies in existential thought—a kind of situated blindspot that is unresponsive to the cultural asymmetries and power differentials identified through a decolonial reading of “modernity.” It helps us get a clearer picture of what methodological racism is and how it operates, even in liberal democratic discourses and their philosophical counterparts.

According to Taylor, “authenticity is a facet of modern individualism” that has its roots in eighteenth-century intellectual Europe’s inward turn (towards our own reflexive awareness), with historical antecedents in Augustine, renaissance humanism, and well-known developments in continental romanticism.<sup>4</sup> Through its articulation in Herder and Rousseau, we glean how the idea of “following a voice of nature within us” slowly grew into the modern cultural value of self-determining freedom. He writes,

Before the late 18th century no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance. There is a certain way of being human that is *my way*. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.<sup>5</sup>

The problem Taylor finds with this outlook is that, after a while, the darker side of modernity—which he associates with instrumental, means-ends reasoning, and atomistic egoism—brought out possible ways of pursuing self-fulfillment that were wrongheaded and self-defeating because, in their narcissism (think of the social nihilism of the “me” generation), they flattened our worldly connections with others. They shattered the force behind our moral imperatives to *truly better ourselves* in any significant way, where significance is understood dialogically through a lived relatedness to others. In search of shade, you can’t unchain the earth from its sun without losing the gift gravitational pull gives the living. You float, you drift, delight in your buoyancy, but you are alone in ways that only shallowly affirm your freedom as personal self-fulfillment. For Taylor, things are of value only against a “backdrop of significance” that is socially derived: the mattering-to-me can’t happen at all if it’s truly *just me* in the world. Modernity thus brought on new sources of worry, “malaises” as Taylor puts it, over the unintended consequences modern freedom and industrial-technological society placed on the individual: “the worry has been repeatedly expressed that the individual lost something important along with the larger social and cosmic horizons of action” that formerly gave weight and import to one’s life by facilely placing it within a great chain of being.<sup>6</sup> Whether god or nature, *deus sive natura*, at the very least the pre-modern individual had a socially derived identification that helped them weigh the significance of their lives in non-trivial ways. Because the malaises of modernity have an alienating effect on the individual, rather than give up the culture of authenticity altogether, Taylor thinks we should try to retrieve some of those pre-modern intuitions but in ways that meet the moral imperatives of today’s liberal democratic society (such as

being more open to difference, politically inclusive, and caring towards others).

Now, one common response to the question of alienation is to point out that, even in the existentialist tradition, alienation can be seen as a basic feature of existence that is not necessarily distortive. Since we do not choose the social matrix into which we are born, there is a certain amount of alienation (as self-estrangement) that is required simply for socialization: to acquire languages we did not invent ourselves but through which we come to understand what might be solely unique about ourselves (or to see it as such). Yet what is distinctive about this kind of basic, grounding alienation is that it, too, establishes a kind of *continuity* of experience that is not present in the colonized subject’s experience of being thrown into the world. This is what is missing from the dialogical account of authenticity—the ways in which colonial/neocolonial power differentials do now allow some beings to meaningfully grow into the “shared” contexts of significance that others do, in fact, rely on to tacitly make sense of their estrangement as *such*. So the “self” in European existentialism is a very different self than the one in decolonial existentialism. In the former there exists a whole self within a life story who is perhaps fragmented, dislocated, and estranged by the conditions she finds herself in, but there is still a there-ness to her narrative identity that can engage in critical introspection and narrative repair through articulating and rearticulating her life story (to herself and others) with tools that show up as tools and do not further alienate her. In short, the picture of authenticity we get from Taylor’s account, though nuanced, boils down to a key difference the role of the individual plays in the existentialism of, say, Sartre versus Buber or Beauvoir. All place centrality on the finite, corporeal individual’s lived experience, but the latter rest on dialogical engagement with a historical community or our social relatedness to others. As a dialogical thinker, Taylor notes,

the general feature of human life that I want to evoke is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression. . . . No one acquires the languages needed for self-definition on their own. We are introduced to them through exchanges with others who matter to us—what George Herbert Mead called “significant others.”<sup>7</sup>

This is where things begin to get rather tricky on the decolonial reading, as one’s significant others are going to be irrevocably shaped by the power and cultural asymmetries of colonial imposition: the notion of kinship, to whom and how we may relate—if at all—are not only deeply predicated on Western epistemic and ontological conventions, but also social categories and hierarchies rooted in biologism and racism. This road leads us to the most prevalent reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* (the master-slave dialectic). But prodding further into the dialogical feature of human existence noted by Taylor, that our identities are contingent upon the acquisition of rich human languages of expression, we run into a

different set of problems. For Taylor, since the socially nested individual cannot create new values *ex nihilo*, she nonetheless affirms an identity by *articulating* it anew, by the enunciative modalities of her life. The centrality of language (in the broad sense, beyond a mere grapholect) is thus a key component of authenticity. Keen to the colonial imposition of European languages, in the section “The Negro and Language,” Fanon remarks: “I am not unaware that [language] is one of man’s attitudes face to face with Being. A man who has language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.”<sup>8</sup> Language is “an *antennae* with which I touch and through which I am touched,” it is an “*umwelt*” that discloses some possibilities but not others.<sup>9</sup> However, for colonized peoples, the cultural and historical languages for self-definition are minimally problematic and maximally violent as mediums for self-realization. Thus, he writes, “I ascribe a basic importance to the phenomenon of language . . . for it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other . . . but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of civilization.”<sup>10</sup> Decolonial and indigenous thinkers have aptly noted the problematic role of language in colonization and imperial settlement projects; Fanon discusses this basic feature of imperial language policy but focuses on the phenomenological and existential impact such policies have on the colonized. Not only is one given the double burden of adopting the colonizer’s language and having to regain one’s “humanity” through it, the struggle is then tripled by the need to maneuver through a world where the dominant social benefits are afforded to the most alienated. According to Fanon, this is why “the negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a *real human being*—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.”<sup>11</sup> When the white European existentialist uses language to rearticulate the articulated possibilities in her world, she is not further alienated (on the existentialist scale), but by contrast, Fanon argues, “when a man of color *profests*, there is alienation. Whenever a man of color *rebukes*, there is alienation.”<sup>12</sup>

On this account, alienation for the colonized subject amounts to *learning skills for successful coping*, for simply bearing out the logic of a terrible calculus. Fanon thus wants to plant the seeds for an “upheaval” from this un-reality that passes as reality (much in the ways the Zapatistas call out the unreality of neoliberal life in the semi-autonomous zone of “La Realidad”) but through careful consideration of the existential parameters that shape the colonized subject’s response to colonial violence. As a radical humanist, Fanon wants to be able to say that, while there is no *telos* towards a one true self that exists as an essential, core identity hidden behind layers of ideology and cultural distortions, there is certainly a living human being nested in a social world that does not allow one to affirm that being’s existence, so that revolt is necessary. But he also wants to say that, even without essentializing notions of authenticity, there is something that would count as more or less authentic forms of dis-alienation. For instance, lashing out by releasing pent-up muscular tension in the form of self or collective auto-destruction is not authentic but psychologically reactionary and a colonial tool for dominating the colonized (by internalizing oppression). This is why Fanon makes a distinction between

existentialist struggles for authenticity and decolonial struggles for “authentic disalienation.” The latter requires a “descent into hell” before an ascent in the echelon of hermeneutic being precisely because the colonized *starts out in the zone of non-being*. That is to say, the colonized must find a way to *not* be in the world in order to *be* a being in the world, to dwell in a pre-predicative understanding of Being that is definitive of human existence (for some). Liberation requires first not being in the world, not because there’s a hierarchal ontology with the zone of non-being at a lower echelon than tacit dwelling of “backgrounds of significance,” but because the zone of non-being is a colonial construct whose invisibility exists on the basis of the visibility of white European contexts of signification.

But how can this double liberatory movement possibly work? Recall that a large part of the suffering—psychological and physical—from the colonial experience comes from the “epidermalization” of oppression, as Fanon calls it. Colonial violence has worked its way into the bodily schema of the colonized, so that Fanon has to propose “nothing short of the liberation of the man of color *from himself*.”<sup>13</sup> But being able to body forth differently is very difficult for anyone, not just the colonized. So the first part of authentic disalienation requires a coming to awareness about the incredible complexity of one’s predicament as colonized peoples. Most “lack the advantage of being able to accomplish this” task of unworlding a world that historically unworlds them, and which one relies on, not to live, but to simply *struggle* for survival. The decolonial existentialist will have to be more existentialist than the European existentialist to accomplish this. The leap is simply greater. Moreover, because Fanon believes we come to our sense of ourselves largely on the basis of the worlds we inhabit and the language we dwell in, moving towards disalienation means nothing short of a concrete “restructuring of the world.”<sup>14</sup> The world will also need to mirror different possibilities than those of the colonizer, hence the importance of non-European national culture and art. He writes: “The effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities . . . the black man must wage war on both levels [economic and existential]: since historically they influence each other, any unilateral liberation is incomplete.”<sup>15</sup> In a way, Fanon’s notion of authentic disalienation moves us paradoxically closer to the original Greek sense of authenticity as *authentikos*, meaning original, a return to the principal source: “indeed, there will be an authentic disalienation only to the degree to which things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, will have been restored to their proper places.”<sup>16</sup> Decolonial existentialism, when seen through Fanon’s work, includes a deeply political aspect that cannot sever the ontic from the ontological in questions of humane existence. It is always already political.

Returning to Taylor, it must be noted that one common hermeneutic reading of oppression points to the *distortive* qualities of instrumental, means-ends reasoning as capturing the kinds of harms Fanon and other postcolonial thinkers identify in European colonialism. It is on the basis of seeing the nature of the world as made up of subjects set out over and against objects (through a subject-object dualism) that instrumentality of others as “things” becomes

possible—that humans are dehumanized, objectified, manipulated, excluded, and enslaved. Hermeneuticists, dialogical existentialists, as well as many critical theorists uphold a version of this argument. It is the failures and unredeemed promises of the Enlightenment that are at fault, as a disenchanting, instrumentalized picture of the world will not yield an open attunement towards others but the kind of “thingification” of non-European peoples Césaire identified in his *Discourse on Colonialism*. But by eliding the force of *racism* as a primary feature of modernity—as a principal “malaise”—this approach is able to maintain a Eurocentric diagnostic hierarchy that points back to the hermeneutic horizon of those responsible for the catastrophes of meaning brought of by European colonialism. Those who set up the episteme are still in charge of diagnosing its flaws through frameworks and conceptual orthodoxies internal to their intellectual traditions, which they are most at home with, and which *more readily show up to them* as the most salient categories to make sense of human predicaments. They are right to think they are right (as logical consistency itself stems from Aristotelian conceptual frameworks that are an important part of those traditions). But that will never account for the lives of those dispossessed by that rightness. When Fanon writes that the dominant European existential, phenomenological and psychoanalytic frameworks fail to account for the “life experience of the black man” and those dispossessed by European colonialism, it is not on account of an act of omission. It is on account of methodological racism. “Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man” for this reason.<sup>17</sup> Under this account, every act of articulation for some is potentially a daunting epistemic task of disarticulation and translation (in order to articulate) for others; the philosophical worlds that flow out of those diagnostic traditions are thus exclusivist in a deeply methodological sense, not in the abstract, but owing to a particular cultural history.

For example, it will often be pointed out that Fanon’s work relies on deeply modern and humanistic lexicons to make sense of the postcolonial predicament and attach the value judgment “unjust” to it, that the salience of his claims would be impossible but for European modernity and its appending discourses of human dignity and universal rights (from which the politics of recognition flows). It is through the European intellectual tradition that Eurocentrism makes sense, and so a hermeneutic circle is set up around the particular concerns of postcolonial and decolonial thinkers. This is how methodological racism takes shape. With what discursive framework is one supposed to work one’s way of oppression other than the only socially legible ones, where the legibility is brought on, in large part, by the violent erasure of alternate frameworks of intelligibility? Undoing normative frameworks may require using normative language steeped in asymmetrical power relations between cultures. When criticism of Fanon’s work (as being steeped in a performative contradiction or trapped in a hermeneutic circle) arises without a metaphilosophical awareness of the racial biases that inform those criticisms and their supporting conceptual scaffolding, methodological racism is at work.

Yet methodological racism is not monological. In examining an intellectual tradition and philosophical worldview, in unbraiding the strands to appraise their fortitude and provenance, it may be possible to see how some strands are responsive to a plurality of intersectional lived concerns while others more readily reify racism or pass off provincial normative frameworks as universal. There is no monolithic standard; the tactics and interpretive strategies employed reflect the lived realities and concerns of living, breathing beings who are deeply affected by the legacies of colonial rule. We are living at a time when haunting degrees of racism against non-European peoples pass for patriotism, with women and girls bearing a disproportionate amount of the harm. We are yet to robustly explore the ways Fanon’s predicament in *Black Skin, White Masks* still holds true today in the neoliberal context and the dehumanization of the immigrant subject. More specifically, we need to address how value-laden economic frameworks work to reproduce marginalized identities (within a North-South context) in ways that both resemble existential accounts of alienation yet differ due to the specificities of colonial history. But we will undoubtedly need conceptual frameworks and philosophical paradigms to begin the great undoing, to give weight and import to the existential lives of postcolonial peoples. For that, we will need parallel projects of disarticulating universalisms and methodological racism in philosophic discourse. To allow us to say, with Fanon, “there is nothing ontological about segregation. Enough of this rubbish.”<sup>18</sup>

NOTES

1. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 221.
2. *Ibid.*, 8; my emphasis.
3. *Ibid.*, 82.
4. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 44.
5. *Ibid.*, 29.
6. *Ibid.*, 3–5.
7. *Ibid.*, 33.
8. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 18.
9. *Ibid.*, 32.
10. *Ibid.*, 17–18.
11. *Ibid.*, 18.
12. *Ibid.*, 60; my emphasis.
13. *Ibid.*, 10.
14. *Ibid.*, 82.
15. *Ibid.*, 11.
16. *Ibid.*, 12.
17. *Ibid.*, 110.
18. *Ibid.*, 186.



## *The Philosophical Gift of Brown Folks: Mexican American Philosophy in the United States*

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In his 1924 book *The Gift of Black Folks*, W. E. B. Du Bois examined the ways in which the traditions of the African American community have benefited, enriched, and gifted the culture, politics, and economic life of the United States. The book was written at a time in which great waves of immigration from Europe were inundating U.S. American shores.<sup>1</sup> Scholars, politicians, and the public were all involved in debating the value of ethnic and cultural diversity for the melting pot. *The Gift of Black Folks* details the ways in which Negro spirituals changed U.S. American folk music, explains how Black laborers contributed to the economic infrastructure of the nation, and analyzes the moral perspective which the African American community injected into political debates about the nature of U.S. American democracy.

In a similar spirit, I want to present the idea of Mexican American philosophy as a new field of study that can enrich the conception of philosophy, and of public life, in the United States. I begin by examining the conditions for the possibility of such a specialization as Mexican American philosophy, drawing on debates in Latin America about the aims and nature of philosophy, for comparison. I then identify several authors who might serve as the beginning of a canon for Mexican American philosophy. I maintain that Du Bois's early examination of African American intellectual work offers suggestions for the way in which this new area of specialization might develop. Mexican American philosophy can provide a theoretical lens for the Mexican American community to understand its relationship to dominant society in the United States. It may also offer philosophical insights that can help to correct any systematic epistemic distortion in U.S. American social and political philosophy that results from the lack of diversity within the profession. Finally, it may add a new voice to political discussions about the role of Latinos/as in the United States and to public policy decisions surrounding multiculturalism, immigration, and racial justice.

### THE POSSIBILITY OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

What exactly is Mexican American philosophy, and what makes such a thing as Mexican American philosophy possible? Students of Latin American philosophy will immediately recognize these kinds of questions. For decades, Latin American thought has been almost entirely defined as a debate about the identity of Latin American culture and of the possibility of producing philosophical knowledge that somehow reflects this reality. If there is such a thing as a distinctly Latin American philosophy, then it will be something intimately connected to features of a broader Latin American society and its cultural makeup. This debate has coalesced around several positions. I want

to concentrate on four of these here to help understand how Mexican American philosophy, as a subgroup within Latin American thought, might be possible as a field of study.

The first position, universalism, denies that there is any kind of philosophy that might be called distinctively Latin American. Philosophy, under this conception, is a field of inquiry that is more like mathematics, or a hard science such as physics. That is, it utilizes logical methods of analysis to arrive at objectively true statements about the world and of human experience within it. Whatever conclusions philosophy reaches, say universalists, will not depend on any specific cultural formations or historical developments. The truth value of statements about the world are grounded in logic and reason and are not affected by the traditions and practices of any particular human society, in the same way that a physical or chemical reaction is the same, under the appropriate conditions, in any place in the world. According to universalists such as Risieri Frondizi or Carlos Pareda, we can talk about philosophy being done *in* Latin America, in the sense of there being philosophy departments and institutes in Latin America that are teaching students and are conducting research on philosophical problems, but it makes little sense to talk about Latin American, Mexican American, or any kind of distinct national philosophy. The truths produced by philosophical inquiry are universal and apply to all human beings regardless of national origin.<sup>2</sup>

Culturalists, such as Mexican scholars Leopoldo Zea or Samuel Ramos, take philosophy to be a humanistic discipline that is concerned to articulate and formalize a culture's worldview or perspective from within. As Zea puts it, the task of philosophy is to consider the issues of "man—not man the abstract, but man the concrete, of flesh and bone, with his own particular problems, yet not particular that they do not cease being proper to man."<sup>3</sup> Under this conception, the philosopher's responsibility is to reflect on the cultural traditions and practices of her own circumstances, elaborating what is often taken for granted, and then to look for any human universals by comparing them to the worldviews of other cultures that have been worked up similarly by other philosophers. Zea writes: "Through these particular problems, and precisely because they are particular, other men can be acknowledged as peer, an acknowledgment and respect for what is acknowledged in a search for a horizontal relation of solidarity of peers among peers."<sup>4</sup> Examples of this sort of effort are found in Samuel Ramos's attempt to describe Mexican national culture through the lens of neurosis provided by psychoanalysis or Jorge Portilla's attempt to articulate what it means to be authentically Mexican using Heideggerian existentialism.<sup>5</sup> To the culturalist, all philosophy is essentially a situated effort by a philosopher to explore and explain his or her cultural surroundings. Therefore, it makes complete sense to talk about the existence of a Latin American, German, Chinese, or even Mexican American philosophy, if by that we mean an attempt to describe the particular problems and issues that attend to Mexican American culture.

A third perspective, criticalism, responds to this debate between universalists and culturalists by arguing that the kind of project which culturalists describe has been

essentially impossible in Latin America throughout most of the modern era. According to Augusto Salazar Bondy, Latin America has, since the European Conquest in 1492, lived under a “culture of domination.”<sup>6</sup> In large part, the traditions, ways of life, practices, and cultural ideals of the region have been those that were imposed first by European colonial powers and then by the military and economic power of the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Latin American philosophy, as the elaboration of a unique cultural perspective, is impossible since Latin American societies have not had an opportunity to develop a genuine or authentic culture. Speaking of attempts at producing Latin American philosophy, Salazar Bondy writes:

Because of its imitative nature across the centuries, until today it has been an alienated and alienating conscience that has given a superficial image of the world and life to man in our national communities. It has not truly responsive to motivations felt by this man, but rather has responded to the goals and vital interests of other men. It has been a plagiarized novel and not the truthful chronicle of our human adventure.<sup>7</sup>

To the extent that Mexican Americans have been discriminated and oppressed within the United States, they have not lived under conditions in which they are free to develop their own authentic culture. For the criticalists, any potential Mexican American philosophy will be a dominated, inauthentic, and unoriginal perspective that borrows on ideas imported from other people’s culture and intellectual efforts. Mexican Americans have not had philosophy, in other words, but might be able to produce it given different social, economic, and political circumstances.

A fourth approach, developed by Jorge Gracia, attempts to move the question of Latin American philosophy and identity away from rigid notions of philosophy and culture assumed by the previous positions. Gracia’s view is that we ought to understand Latin American philosophy as ethnic philosophy, that is, the philosophy of the ethnos of Latin Americans. An ethnos, Gracia explains, is a group of people who have been

brought together by history. The model of the family is used as a metaphor to understand how an ethnic group can have unity without having all the members of the group necessarily share some first order properties at any particular time in the history or throughout that history. Not all of them need have the same height, weight, eye color, degree of intelligence, customs or even ancestry. Ethne are like families in that they originate and continue to exist as a result of historical events, such as marriage, but their members need not share common properties, although they may in certain circumstances do so.<sup>8</sup>

Under this conception, Latin Americans are a group of people formed by the encounter of Europeans and indigenous peoples of the Americas starting in 1492 and who are connected together still through this historical

continuity even though they do not all share the same properties today. Latin American philosophy, then, will be the working up or the elaboration of the perspective of the Latin American ethnos. Since this ethnos is historical and contextual, the criteria for what counts as Latin American philosophy will be open, changing, and nonessentialist, as is the makeup of the ethos itself. For instance, Mexican and Argentinian intellectual work might be Latin American philosophy, as these societies are part of the Latin American ethnos—tied to the same historical origins of the Conquest—even though they are today different nations and very culturally distinct. And pre-Columbian indigenous thought, such as that of the Aztecs or the Mayas, might be Latin American philosophy, depending on how we understand the historical relations of Europeans and indigenous people in the context of Mexico.

Using Gracia’s framework, I claim that Mexican American philosophy is best understood as an ethnic philosophy; that is, it is the philosophical work produced by the Mexican American ethnos. That Mexican Americans form an ethnos is not particularly difficult to establish. Mexican Americans are a distinct group of people who, like Latin Americans in general, were brought into existence by particular set of historical circumstances. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo put an end to the Mexican-American War, and the United States took over the northern half of Mexico, or what is now most of the U.S. Southwest. The treaty specified that those thousands of Mexicans who lived in the territory occupied by the United States had a choice: they could leave to Mexican jurisdiction, or they could stay and within one year be recognized as U.S. American citizens. Those Mexicans who elected to stay came to be known as the first U.S. American citizens of Mexican descent, or Mexican Americans. Thus, as historian Juan Gomez-Quifonens argues, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had the effect of constituting the community of Mexican Americans as a unique population within U.S. American society.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, because of the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Hernandez v. Texas* in 1954, the U.S. government continues to recognize Mexican Americans as a distinct national group within the United States, deserving of special protected status under the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus, Mexican Americans appear to fit Gracia’s description of an ethnos; they are a group of people brought into existence by specific historical circumstances. Even though they do not all share the same properties, such as race, language, or phenotype, they are connected through family relations to the historical origins of 1848. Mexican American philosophy is, then, the philosophical work produced by members of this ethnos.

Obviously, some of the themes of Mexican American philosophy will overlap with those within Latin American philosophy, as the Mexican American ethnos has historical ties with the Latin American ethnos in general. Yet, we can also expect Mexican American philosophy to be unique and distinct since the Mexican American ethnos is also distinct from the Latin American, and from other Latino/a ethne, in particular. For example, the second largest Latino community in the United States, Puerto Ricans, might also be thought of as an ethnos. Puerto Ricans were constituted as U.S. American citizens of Puerto Rican descent much in the same way as Mexican Americans were—by a specific

act of Congress, the Jones Act, in 1917. It makes sense to speak of the possibility of Puerto Rican philosophy as a field of study as well. That is, we can speak of the philosophical work produced by the Puerto Rican ethnos. Puerto Rican philosophy would be similar to Mexican American philosophy in some ways and very different in others. Both ethne share an experience of being tied to the Latin American ethnos through complex historical-family ties. Both were formed by U.S. American imperialism and have had their cultures and traditions repressed by U.S. American dominant society. Yet, there is at least one important difference: the Puerto Rican experience of being able to travel between the island and the U.S. mainland gives Puerto Ricans an experience of a homeland that is not quite the same as the Mexican American experience of being situated in-between Mexico and the United States nor the same kind of immigrant experience of Mexicans coming to the United States. Indeed, much of Gloria Anzaldúa's groundbreaking phenomenology in *Borderlands/La Frontera* is an explication of this sense of Mexican American *nepantla*—being stuck between different worlds and not being able to feel at home except in the interstices or borders.<sup>10</sup> These different transnational dynamics would provide rich material for phenomenological accounts of Mexican American and Puerto Rican identity that could complement the extensive historical and cultural studies about the relationships of these two Latino communities.

### FEATURES OF MEXICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

There is indeed a large body of artistic, literary, and scholarly work produced by Mexican Americans, but does any of it count as philosophical? To respond to this concern, it is instructive to turn to the work of Alejandro Santana and his attempt to solve the impasse in the debate about whether or not the pre-Columbian Aztec people of Mexico did philosophy. Mexican scholar Miguel Leon de Portillo argues that certain Aztec writings display a skepticism toward the religious worldview of their society and seem to ask certain kinds of questions about metaphysical reality that suggest a philosophical attitude.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Susana Nuccetelli finds that while some Aztec texts seem to exhibit inquiries into reality beyond the official religious myths of Aztec culture, this is not enough to justify saying that the Aztecs engaged in philosophy properly speaking.<sup>12</sup> To count as philosophical work, she maintains, the Aztec texts would have to offer alternative theoretical accounts to explain the world, and this is simply not something they do.

Santana responds to this debate by reflecting on the variety of activities that philosophers often take to constitute philosophical work. These are often divided in terms of the subject matter, origins, aims, and methods of philosophy. He catalogs them as such:

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. Alternatively, we might note that philosophy is primarily concerned with (2) living a worthwhile, meaningful life or living in the right way.

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.

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.

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.<sup>13</sup>

Santana then asks whether we find these characteristics of philosophy in Aztec writings. His answer is that we do find some of them, but not all. Yet, rather than try to determine the necessary and sufficient criteria among these points for a work to count as philosophy, Santana utilizes a Wittgensteinian family resemblance approach and looks to "the complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss crossing; sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail" that bridge many different philosophical works.<sup>14</sup> Just as Wittgenstein did not believe there were neat conceptual boundaries on language, Santana holds we ought to not think of any on philosophy. There is no one characteristic or set of characteristics that distinguish philosophical work from non-philosophical work: "Instead what we see is a family of various ways of doing philosophy that bear similarities to each other in various ways, with nothing common to them all."<sup>15</sup> As such, some Aztec texts can be considered philosophy proper since they exhibit some of the aims and subject matter of other philosophy texts, even though they do not contain *all* of the methods found in other philosophical works.

Similarly, I would claim that if we look at a variety of Mexican American intellectual works, we can find authors engaging in a variety of intellectual tasks that overlap and criss-cross with the kind of inquiries we find in other philosophical texts. Many texts from the era of the Chicano Civil Rights movement ought to count as Mexican American philosophy, and with them we can imagine building a kind of philosophical canon for this area of specialization. I have argued previously that the work of Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farm Worker union, ought to be considered as philosophical meditations on nonviolence and social change.<sup>16</sup> Armando Rendon's *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) examines Mexican American cultural identity and argues that its terms provide the possibility of expanding U.S. national identity in a cosmopolitan direction that recognizes the ethical obligation of the United States to other peoples. Elihu Carranza's *Chicanismo: Philosophical Fragments* (1977) uses Kierkegaardian existentialism to examine the hybridity of Mexican American identity and proposes that the resolution of the Mexican American identity problematic could offer a new concepts for conceiving of race in the United States. Gloria Anzaldúa's

*Borderlands/La Frontera* (1981) is perhaps one of the most well-known and influential Chicana texts, widely regarded in literary, ethnic, and women's studies, as well as philosophy, primarily for what might be called a phenomenological investigation of Mexican American life and culture along the U.S./Mexico border. In numerous essays, Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez attempts to provide new vocabulary to interrogate white supremacy beyond a black/white binary. She also raises question about the discourses of diversity and multiculturalism that still privilege a white dominant-colonial perspective. Tomas Atencio's decades-long work draws parallels between Socratic dialogue and the conversations among Northern New Mexico villagers in an attempt to develop a model of grassroots knowledge production grounded in Heideggerian phenomenology, Habermasian discourse ethics, and Freirean pedagogy.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the recent work of Carlos Alberto Sánchez attempts to bridge U.S. American philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Stanley Cavell with Mexican American thought and, most notably, attempts to articulate a phenomenology of the Mexican immigrant experience and its continuing impact on the Mexican American ethnos.<sup>18</sup>

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL GIFT OF BROWN FOLKS

So far I have argued that Mexican American philosophy is a possible field of specialization and that there are works now that deserve study as examples of Mexican American philosophy. But why *should* we study Mexican American philosophy? Why should we think it is an important field of study? W. E. B. Du Bois can offer some guidance here.

In 1897, Du Bois addressed the second gathering of the American Negro Academy in Washington, D.C. In his speech, he laid out a mission statement for the organization of politically committed African American men that would guide his insights as a scholar and activist for many decades.<sup>19</sup> Du Bois argued that the American Negro Academy ought to devote itself, in general, to the task of "racial uplift," that is, to improving the situation of Black Americans in the United States through two main strategies.<sup>20</sup> First, the members of the academy ought to delve into engaged scholarship in history, philosophy, and law in order to help reveal the "ideals of life" buried in the traditions and practices of African American life. Here, Du Bois relied on a framework that he inherited from German Romanticism that held different races or cultures shared certain common ideals or purposes, implicit in their folkways, tying all the members of that race or culture together.<sup>21</sup> Knowing these ideals of life could help a people to understand themselves better and appreciate their strengths and abilities more robustly. The second task of the academy was to be more outward focused. Du Bois recommended investigating the ideals of life of the Black community and learning how they could make a contribution to the "culture of the common country" and towards humanity as a whole. This second task was the focus of Du Bois's *The Gift of Black Folk*, in which he tried to make explicit the numerous cultural contributions of African Americans to U.S. American society and politics.

The importance of Mexican American philosophy might be justified along the two lines identified by Du Bois. First, the task of Mexican American philosophy might be to examine and articulate the experience of the Mexican

American ethnos for the purpose of developing theories and strategies of resistance against discrimination and oppression from dominant U.S. society. In this regard, Mexican American philosophy would be akin to the approach of liberation philosophy in Latin America.<sup>22</sup> Its purposes would be, first, to decolonize, that is, to reduce or eliminate its reliance on ideas, methods, and aims from European and North American philosophy, or to elaborate new ways of philosophizing that are more consonant with the experiences of Mexican American. Along these lines, Mexican American philosophy would also endeavor to develop ways of better understanding systems of political, social, and economic oppression, largely controlled by North American and European power, that confront Mexican American people today. Some of the classic works of Chicano/a thought, such as those of Cesar Chavez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, or Reies Lopez Tijerina, attempt to outline cultural features of Mexican American life that can serve as alternatives to the materialist values of dominant U.S. American society. A more recent example of this kind of effort is the work of Jacqueline M. Martinez. She uses Merleau-Ponty as a starting point to recognize a unique form of Chicana lesbian phenomenology in the work of Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa that contains important insights into intersectional collective liberation.<sup>23</sup> In such a mode, Mexican American philosophy would be like a theoretical toolbox that would allow the Mexican American ethnos to better understand its situation in the United States and work toward more effective liberation from arbitrary institutional and cultural constraints. This mission has long been part of Chicano and Chicana studies in the United States, but philosophers have rarely, if at all, been involved in this discourse, which has long been dominated by historians, social scientists, and literary scholars.

The second task of Mexican American philosophy would then be oriented outward, focused on identifying ideals, concepts, or what Manuel Vargas calls "cultural resources" that might be offered as "gifts" to the broader society.<sup>24</sup> In particular, developing Mexican American philosophy as an area of specialization is one way of addressing what is being called a problem of "arrogant whiteness" in U.S. American philosophy.<sup>25</sup> According to the American Philosophical Association (APA), almost 80 percent of employed philosophers in the United States are men, and almost all of them are white. The APA also finds that only about 2 percent of philosophers in Ph.D.-granting institutions are Latino/a—one of the lowest of all ethnic groups in the United States—despite the fact that Latinos, and particularly those of Mexican heritage, are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States and expected to be about 20 percent of the U.S. population in just a few years.<sup>26</sup> These numbers indicate that philosophy in general is not a particularly attractive area of study for students of color to pursue. A specialization in Mexican American philosophy could create a space, alongside the field of Latino/a and Latin American philosophy, for underrepresented students and faculty to enter in the profession, build networks, and create mentorship pipelines that are crucial to encouraging students to pursue academic work.

There is a related epistemic aspect to this part of gift. Manuel Vargas indicates that the lack of diversity in certain



fields of philosophy, such as moral, social, and political thought, makes them subject to possible epistemic error and distortion. If some perspectives are left out of critical discussions in these areas, then the basic background assumptions can come to reflect the experiences and understandings of some groups of people rather than others. What, then, is taken as “reasonable” interpretation of our moral, social, or political life might actually be very partial or limited. For instance, Charles Mills has demonstrated that social contract theory tends to rely on conjectures and beliefs that reflect the outlooks of the propertied male philosophers who first set out the theory.<sup>27</sup> If Mexican American philosophy can create a home for more voices in the profession, then it not only helps in terms of demographic representation, but also in terms of improving the kind of truth that can be produced by our philosophical theories. As Vargas points out, “[U]ntil our discipline has had substantial engagement with the beliefs, intuitions, convictions, concerns, and standpoints of those in non-male, non-white social positions, it should, on the present account, be extraordinarily difficult for us to make out the precise ways in which we are subject to distortion.”<sup>28</sup>

Mexican American philosophy may also be able to contribute a variety of gifts toward the study of U.S. American political and social life. The first gathering of Mexican American philosophers at the Pacific Division meeting of the APA in Vancouver, Canada, in spring 2015 yielded a collection of papers over a wide range of issues about contemporary U.S. American society including immigration, the nature of the nation state, the relationship of Mexican American thought to North American pragmatism, the legacy of U.S. American colonialism, and the place of indigeneity in Mexican and North American culture. Clearly, Mexican American philosophers are now contributing to an ongoing investigation that seeks explore and define new diverse concepts of democracy, citizenship, human rights, and cultural production from the perspective of particular historical subjects on the “silenced, subalternized, and dominated side of the colonial difference.”<sup>29</sup>

The growth of Latino/a philosophy in general represents an opportunity to discuss issues about the discipline of philosophy and about the culture and intercultural possibilities within the Americas in new and exciting ways. In less than a year after the first gathering of Mexican American philosophers in Vancouver, a new group, the Society for Mexican American Philosophy (SMAP), has developed, which hopes to maintain and broaden these discussions as part of philosophical scholarship. In a short time, SMAP has been able to organize group meetings at two divisional meetings of the APA and has been invited to offer a special guest panel at the annual gathering of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy in 2016. Mexican American philosophy, then, represents another theoretical lens with which to continue examining questions about identity, power, and citizenship in the United States. With an added level of granularity and attention to Latino/a historical development, Mexican American philosophy can hopefully yield results for improving the lives of Mexican Americans and for refining the conceptual resources of U.S. American philosophy, and of public policy discussions, in general.

NOTES

1. I follow Elizabeth Martinez in using the term “U.S. American” to refer to citizens and residents of the United States in order to distinguish them from other communities in North and Latin America that also consider themselves as “American.” See Elizabeth Martinez, “Don’t Call This Country ‘America’: How the Name Was Hijacked and Why It Matters Today More Than Ever,” *Z Magazine* (July-August 2003): 69–72.
2. See Risieri Frondizi, “Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9 (1949): 345–55; and Carlos Pareda, “Latin American Philosophy: Some Vices,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 3 (2006): 192–203.
3. Leopoldo Zea, “Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem,” in *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (New York: Prometheus, 2004), 378.
4. Zea, “Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem,” 378.
5. Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, trans. Peter B. Earle (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); Carlos Alberto Sanchez, *The Suspension of Seriousness: On the Phenomenology of Jorge Portilla* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).
6. Augusto Salazar Bondy, “The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Philosophic Thought,” in *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (New York: Prometheus, 2004), 395.
7. *Ibid.*, 392.
8. Jorge J. E. Gracia, “Identity and Latin American Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, eds. Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otavio Bueno (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 260.
9. Juan Gomez-Quifones, “On Culture,” *Chicano-Riqueña* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 29–47.
10. See AnaLouise Keating, “From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Napanltas and Napanltaras: Anzalduan Theories for Social Change,” *Human Architecture: Journal of Sociology of Self-Knowledge* IV, Special Issue (Summer 2006): 5–16.
11. Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).
12. Susana Nuccetelli, *Latin American Thought: Philosophical Problems and Arguments* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002).
13. Alejandro Santana, “Did the Aztecs Do Philosophy?,” *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 4.
14. *Ibid.*, 5.
15. *Ibid.*
16. See José-Antonio Orosco, *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).
17. Miguel Montiel, Tomas Atencio, and E. A. “Tony” Mares, *Resolana: Emerging Chicano Dialogues on Community and Globalization* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2009).
18. Carlos Alberto Sanchez, “On Pendejos and Philosophers: Reflections on the Thought of Jose-Antonio Burciaga, or a Mexican American Philosophy of Culture,” Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Vancouver, Canada. April 2015. Conference presentation; “Philosophy and the Post-Immigrant Fear,” *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 18, no. 1 (2011): 31–32.
19. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography of A Race: 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 174.
20. W. E. B. DuBois, “The Conservation of the Races,” in *The Problem of the Color Line At the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nahum Dimitri Chandler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 51–65.
21. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Lines of Descent: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2014).



22. Ivan Marquez, "Liberation in Theology, Philosophy, and Pedagogy," in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, eds. Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otavio Bueno (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 301.
23. Jacqueline M. Martinez, *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity: Communication and Transformation in Praxis* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).
24. Manuel Vargas, "On the Value of Philosophy: The Latin American Case," *Comparative Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2010): 33–52.
25. Danielle M. LaSusa, "In a Profession Plagued by Homogeneity, a Philosophy Conference Offers Diversity," *Truth-Out*. Truthout.org. August 16, 2014. Accessed August 17, 2015, from <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/25589-in-a-profession-plagued-by-homogeneity-a-philosophy-conference-delivers-diversity>
26. See Robert E. Sanchez, "The Process of Defining Latino/a Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic Latino Issues in Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 2.
27. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell University Press, 1999).
28. Quoted in Sanchez, "The Process of Defining Latino/a Philosophy," 2.
29. Ramon Grosfoguel, "Latin@s and the Decolonization of the U.S. Empire in the 21st Century," *Social Science Information* 47, no. 4 (2008): 618. See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, and Coloniality," *City* 8, no. 1 (2004): 29–56.

assessment. I will then turn attention toward some further points of reflection of my own. In closing, I will touch upon the importance of dialogue for philosophical engagement. Ultimately, I wish to simply continue to contribute to a very vibrant debate that this book has successfully fostered on Gracia's scholarship.

The first part of *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity*, titled "Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, and Philosophy," explores the concepts of race and ethnicity as they specifically relate to Latino identity and the role that philosophy as a discipline can play in clarifying said concepts. This section is home to essays by (in respective order): Lucius T. Outlaw Jr., Linda Alcoff Martín, K. Anthony Appiah, and Lawrence Blum. Each of their essays takes as its focus Gracia's *Surviving Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality* (2005). Jaksic notes in the introduction the volume as the first of its kind in its attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationality (7). Specifically, it is in this text that Gracia develops the Genetic Common-Bundle View of race, which makes use of descent and socially agreed upon, genetically transmittable physical features to define a race (Jaksic 7). Moreover, Gracia goes on to terminologically clarify the definition of an ethnicity by proposing the Familial-Historical View of ethnicity. According to Gracia, ethne should be conceived of as extended families that result from historical contingencies but lack any fixed set of properties given the fluidity of contingencies that give rise to them (Jaksic 7). Members of an ethne share in some properties with members of their group and are formed much like families are—through a series of contingencies that vary without strict properties. Finally, Gracia argues that nationality is a social construct with a lived reality that is reflected through the political organization of a people for a common good (Jaksic 7). In sum, Gracia is of the position that philosophy has a special role in clarifying these terms and, further, that clarification is key to the survival of their appropriate use.

In brief, critically engaging Gracia's arguments, Outlaw argues that the emphasis that Gracia places on the role of philosophy might simply be too much (34). Alcoff advances the claim that race and ethnicity are not as separable as Gracia suggests (39). Appiah questions Gracia's concept of race and ethnicity and argues that they are inadequate and require further amendment to account for internal group differences (50). Finally, Blum argues that Gracia's concept of race and ethnicity does not actually track the way the concepts function experientially (63). In response to these criticisms, Gracia maintains that we require a discipline that can do conceptual clarificatory work, and philosophy is well suited to do so, particularly in regards to race, ethnicity, and nationality. Hence, he argues consistent with his positions that race and ethnicity should be conceptualized as distinct entities although they at times overlap (Gracia 77). He holds that his position on race and ethnicity was never intended to account for all internal group differences, and, further, that his position seeks to prescribe criterion for race and ethnicity that track lived experiences, but need not always reflect our folk understandings of them (78).

The second part of *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity* is titled "Hispanic/Latino Identity." This part of

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity: Jorge J. E. Gracia and His Critics*

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*Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity: Jorge J. E. Gracia and His Critics* edited by Iván Jaksic pays tribute to the lifetime scholarly achievements of Jorge J. E. Gracia. The book is constructed in three parts that seek to address different aspects of Gracia's work. Each part of the volume consists of a series of essays that critically engage Gracia's work and at the end of each part, there is a response from Gracia himself. The first part of the book takes as its critical focal point Gracia's contributions to the philosophy of race, ethnicity, and nationality. The second part of the book specifically engages Gracia's conceptualization of Hispanic/Latino identity. Finally, the third part of the book addresses Gracia's metaphilosophical project of defining Latin American philosophy and the role of Hispanics/Latinos in the academic field of philosophy. There is no doubt that Gracia's contributions to philosophy have been major and influential, and this book is a true testament to that fact. However, and more importantly, this book demonstrates the value of dialogue as a cornerstone of critical philosophical engagement. *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity* not only explores Gracia's contributions to philosophy of race and ethnicity and Latin American philosophy, but it also exemplifies what critical philosophical dialogue ought to look like through its structure of engagement between author and critics. In what follows I will briefly describe each of the parts of the book and their central points of

the volume focuses on Gracia's arguments about race, ethnicity, and Hispanic/Latino identity in *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (1999). The second part of the volume picks up on the topics explored in the first part. However, this section of the volume is targeted at the terms Hispanic and Latino and their role as ethnic and racial terms. In this book Gracia defends the position that Hispanic/Latino constitutes a distinguishable ethnic group that can and ought to be considered distinct from nationality (Jaksić 12). Further, Gracia discusses the uses of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" and argues that the term "Hispanic" is more advantageous in use because it captures cultural and historical contingencies that would otherwise be missed (Jaksić 12). Notably, Gracia prefers "Hispanic" over "Latino" because it captures an important historical relation to the Iberian peninsula that "Latino" does not. Gracia further argues Hispanic/Latino is best understood through the Familial-Historical model of ethnicity, whose contingent historical commencement is best captured by the encounter of 1492 between Iberians and Amerindians (Jaksić 12). Finally, the book maintains that Hispanics/Latinos are perceived as foreigners and this accounts for their marginalization in the discipline of United States-based philosophy. This section of the book is home to critical essays by (in respective order): J. L. A. García, Richard J. Bernstein, Robert Gooding-Williams, Gregory Pappas, Ila Stavans, and Eduardo Mendieta. Consistent with the structure of the volume, Gracia provides a response at the end of the section.

In brief, García questions the very concept of ethnic identity, and hence he also questions the concept of Hispanic identity (92). Bernstein takes particular concern with the tension between the descriptive and the prescriptive role that Gracia's project undertakes (106). Gooding-Williams advances the claim that Gracia's conceptualization of Hispanic/Latino identity through his Familial-Historical View does not sufficiently distinguish it from other groups of people that Gracia wants to pick out and identify as Hispanic (115). Pappas argues that Gracia underemphasizes certain aspects of Hispanic identity that are context specific as part of his view (124). Stavans maintains that Gracia fails to look at language adequately as an integral part of Latino identity in the United States (135). Finally, Mendieta demonstrates concern over the issue of naming and the use of the term "Hispanic" as well as Gracia's notion of philosophy (Mendieta 142). Gracia attentively responds to each of the critics in the final chapter of the section. He maintains that many of his critics have either begged the question or are relying on problematic assumptions (Gracia 149). He reiterates the claim that ethnicity cannot be explained through the use of necessary and sufficient conditions because the properties that accompany group members change with time (Gracia 152). Hence, it is not within the scope of his project to add more context-specific details for this very reason (culture, language, static history). Ultimately, he maintains that an upshot of his position is reflected in the fact that membership of certain members of an ethnic group are, in fact, questionable while others are not, and this is something a theory of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity requires (156).

The third part of *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity* is titled "Hispanics/Latinos and Philosophy." This section of the volume primarily focuses on the arguments advanced in *Latinos in America* (2008). *Latinos in America* is notable in that it is first book to structurally and comprehensively tackle issues of Latino philosophy in the United States (Jaksić 17). This book is primarily motivated by the changing demographics of the United States (Jaksić 19). Notably, the book addresses the perceived threat that the growing Latino community is having on non-Latino communities as noted through the marketplace, affirmative action, and linguistic rights (Jaksić 19). Given the situation of changing demographics, Gracia responds by arguing that at root of the trouble is a misconception about Latino identity (Jaksić 19). There exists a misconception that all Latino people are the same, or rather that they share a common essence (Jaksić 19). It is to this misconception that Gracia seeks to respond by arguing through his Familial-Historical View that Latinos do not share a common essence, but rather they are a diverse ethnic group that is united by historical relations and contingencies that draw them together (Jaksić 21). Moreover, it is in *Latinos in America* that Gracia attends to the marginalization of Latino philosophy from the philosophical canon (Jaksić 21). Gracia maintains that tradition has dictated that certain voices count as authoritative while others do not, thus accounting for the absence of Latino philosophy in philosophical canons worldwide (Jaksić 21). Furthermore, he argues that a major contributing factor to the marginalization of Latino philosophy comes from the position that Latinos themselves have with regard to Latino philosophy that stems from an internalized colonial mentality (Jaksić 21). Gracia argues that in order for Latino philosophy to be regarded as valuable it must be taught philosophically (Jaksić 21). This section is home to essays by the following authors (in respective order): Renzo Llorente, Susana Nuccetelli, María Cristina González and Nora Stigol, and Howard McGary. Consistent with the other sections of the volume, the section closes with responses by Gracia.

Briefly, Llorente maintains that Gracia is inconsistent about his use of "Hispanic" (184). Nuccetelli takes issue with Gracia's method of defining Latino philosophy insofar as it falls short of answering which works are to be included and excluded as part of its canon (196). González and Stigol maintain that Gracia's Familial Historical approach to the Latino ethnos, and hence its philosophy, faces trouble when considered in regions outside of the United States, e.g., Argentina (204). Finally, McGary takes up the topic of affirmative action and argues that Gracia wants to limit the types of justifications that can be used to legitimate affirmative action policy, but, unfortunately, the justification he uses stands on shaky grounds (216). In response to his critics, Gracia maintains that he has not changed his position on the use of "Hispanic" versus "Latino." However, he does note that he has further expanded the list of advantages carried by the use of the term "Latino" in *Latinos in America* (220). Context is key in determining when "Hispanic" is more useful than "Latino" or vice versa (Gracia 223). Furthermore, addressing Nuccetelli, he argues that the project of defining what does or does not count as part of the canon is not a philosophical project, but rather it is a historical one (Gracia 221). With respect to González and Stigol's claims, Gracia maintains that the boundaries

between Latino philosophers in the United States and in Latin America are not as stark as González and Stigol make them appear (Gracia 241). Finally, in response to McGary, Gracia notes that he may have not been as clear as he could have been in defining the goods of justification for the legitimation of affirmative action (246). However, Gracia maintains that this does not undermine his claims.

*Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity* does a magnificent job at critically engaging Gracia's philosophical contributions. However, I believe one of the things the book does best is exemplify critical philosophical dialogue. The last chapter of the book speaks to virtue of dialogue. In "Closing Thoughts" Gracia discusses the importance of understanding that philosophy is always an unfinished product, and it is only when we realize this fact about our discipline that we can become its true practitioners (247). *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity*, as noted by the structure and content of the volume, embodies the unfinished project of philosophy through critical dialogue, and in this capacity I take it to be one of its most virtuous contributions. The scholars in this volume take up the work of Gracia in a manner that demonstrates not just philosophical prowess, but an openness to dialogue. Moreover, Gracia's attentive responses signal the importance of openness to philosophical dialogue. As Gracia himself notes, "Only when we understand that it is not the end we crave but the road toward it do we grasp the nature of our discipline, becoming true practitioners of it. Philosophy is ultimately a Faustian enterprise" (247). In this vein the volume realizes the nature of philosophy through dialogue.

Following the emphasis on critical dialogue with Gracia's scholarship, I now turn attention toward some of my thoughts after finishing the book. First, I noted that many criticisms advanced about Gracia's work dealt with the generality of his views. For instance, Nuccetelli's arguments in regards to the inclusion and exclusion of texts seemed to suggest that Gracia's position on delineating Latino philosophy fell short insofar as it did not practically give a sense of what ought to or ought not to be included as part of the canon. I wondered, however, if Gracia's position could have been augmented, in fact strengthened, if the generality of his theories were accompanied by particularity. In other words, it seems to be that Gracia's positions could have been made clearer if he had provided examples of the ways in which his theory could be particularly or contextually applied. In his response to Nuccetelli, Gracia does just this as he considers the case of the *Popol Vuh*. However, this appears in his response to Nuccetelli's arguments, not as part of his overall theoretical presentation. Hence, the model of engagement suggested that Gracia's overall project could have benefited greatly from providing further particular examples that could hedge against the types of criticisms presented in the volume.

Second, Gracia defines Latino philosophy as the philosophy of an ethnos whereby philosophy is viewed as an ethnic product, and like an ethne it is changing, dependent on context and history (239). Nevertheless, I was left wondering about the particularities of the context and the dependencies that Gracia alludes to with possible subgenres of Latino philosophy in mind. Specifically, I

wonder about Latina feminist philosophy or Chicana/o philosophy and how Gracia's theory would attend to fields such as these. Although his position seems to suggest that Latina feminist philosophy or Chicana/o philosophy could fit within the philosophy of an ethnos given the fact that an ethnos is formed in much the same way as a family, it remained unclear as to how we might navigate the dynamics of the presence of these fields and their interactions as part of Latino philosophy or Latin American philosophy more broadly. Would we simply consider them separate ethnic philosophies? How would we situate them as part of the philosophy of an ethnos given the complexity of the ethnos itself? It seems to me that Gracia would maintain that this is wholly unproblematic. Insofar as Latina and Chicana/o is part of a Latino ethnos, then we have a starting point for inclusion, but the generality of his position makes me question its ability to account for the dynamic particularities of an ethnos.

Finally, as I closed the volume, I wondered about coalitional work. Gracia goes to great lengths to clearly define Latino philosophy as well as Latin American philosophy. Yet, in maintaining the distinctness of the field, I was struck by the fact that ethnicities are murky and at times overlap with other racial and ethnic markers. Much like Alcoff suggests that race and ethnicity cannot be distinguished in the way that Gracia does, I considered whether defining Latino philosophy as the philosophy of an ethnos might shadow the links that the Latino ethnos shares with blackness or Africa. In maintaining its distinctness, might we be overlooking the dynamic and complex mixing that makes up a Latino ethnos? I believe Gracia would respond by maintaining that his condition of fluidity and context for an ethnos can account for these considerations. However, I am not sure if accounting for the contingencies sufficiently grapples with the important practicalities of coalitional work. In the spirit of fostering philosophical dialogue, maintaining distinctness seems like it might also alienate Latino philosophy from having conversations across the disciplinary table with fields like Africana philosophy and African American philosophy with which it shares similar philosophical concerns. Most notably, the fields share considerations over the status of their fields as legitimate philosophies, a point that, to me, should garner further attention.

Hence, I conclude my remarks by pushing the dialogical envelope further and considering what conversations we have yet to have as part of our unfinished philosophical projects. More pointedly, I want to invite conversations across our many ethnic philosophical tables. There is no doubt that Jorge J. E. Gracia's scholarship has contributed tremendously to the growth and fostering of issues of race, ethnicity, nationality, and Latin American philosophy. His scholarship has undoubtedly made tremendous impact and has made possible the dialogue with which this review is in conversation. Latin American philosophy today would not look the same without him. My thoughts here merely serve to continue the dialogue which Gracia has initiated and continues to foster and is exemplified in the pages of this volume. My greatest hope, then, is that we can continue to nurture our positions as philosophical practitioners as Gracia would have it.

## *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*

Edited by Ellie D. Hernández and Eliza Rodríguez y Gibson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014). 292 pp. ISBN 978-1137431073.

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*The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*, edited by Ellie D. Hernández and Eliza Rodríguez y Gibson, is a collection that interrogates the cultural and political fiction that is the Latina/o experience “created by media, academic discussions, and grassroots politics” (1). As Hernández and Rodríguez y Gibson highlight in their introduction, the Latina/o experience is a space of contradiction, and this collection of essays engages “the aesthetics, the politics and the culture of citizenship . . . [by] mapping out the difficult terrain of contemporary cultural politics and its aesthetics for the 21st century” (1). Both its sources and perspectives are varied, providing readers with a rich and diverse collection of essays from some of the leading Latina and Chicana theorists of our time.

The essays are not arranged by theme and instead create an organic compilation with academic inquiries into Latinidad/Latina/o experience using the following critical lenses: Latina/o through Queer Scholarship (Chapter 2 – Camp and drag using RuPaul’s *Drag Race* and *Ugly Betty*; Chapter 5 – “Present-based resistance” and “utopic creation” using Graphic Novels and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*). Latina/o through quintessential Chicana texts and scholarship (Chapter 1 – Chicana or Latina, Alter-nativity and mestiza consciousness using Selena and Jennifer Lopez; Chapter 6 – The anthologizing of *This Bridge Called my Back*; Chapter 7 – Bridging global capital and empire using Anzaldúa’s: bridge, drawbridge, sandbar and island). Latina/o through inquiries into popular cultural (Chapter 8 – The postmodern using Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*, public monuments and gorilla history; Chapter 9 – Neoliberalism using the Chupacabras; Chapter 10 – Labor and immigration, recasting Superheroes using photography). Other lenses include Latina/o through crónica and autohistoria (Chapter 3 – Ethnographic excursion, reassessing history, and bearing witness through travel); and Latina/o through the reclamation of heart (Chapter 4 – *Chicana Artistry: Aesthetic Struggle, Aisthesis, “Freedom”*).

As a whole, *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship* is a demonstration of contemporary Latina/o praxis, and not a simplistic compilation of what it “means” to be Latino/a. As Hernández and Rodríguez y Gibson explain, “these chapters trace some of the emergent lines in the field of Latina/o cultural studies and brings together familiar articulations and questions about structures and circulations of power, [where] feeling and knowing complicate each other and intersect with memory, identity and intellectual work” (10). The editors and authors, through their academic articulations, address legitimacy, nation, and ultimately a sense of belonging (10) which is prominent in Latina/o discourse, in popular culture, in the hallways of academia,

and the hotel lobbies of conferences. The solidarity and belonging called for by and within this collection challenges emerging scholars to demand more of themselves and of popular discourse.

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, in “Dyad or Dialectic? Deconstructing Chicana/Latina identity Politics,” opens the collection with a critique of Frances Aparicio’s work on Jennifer Lopez and Selena Quintanilla. Here Gaspar de Alba engages Emma Perez’s decolonial imaginary to critique conflating the colonial history and subjectivity of a Chicana, South Texas, Tejana star with a Puerto Rican actress from the Bronx. Gaspar de Alba maps how conflating the terms “Chicana” and “Latina” make Latina a “top-down construction similar to the Hispanic label” (16). She not only challenges us to question the over simplification of the Latina label, she reminds readers that Chicana/os are native to the land-base of el norte; the mainstream troupe of the Latino experience as an immigrant narrative erases the history of the conquered Mexican North (11–34).

In “Decolonial New Mexican@ Travels: Music, Waving, Melancholia, and Redemption,” Chela Sandoval and Peter J. García embarking on an “ethnographic excursion” that returns them to a shared New Mexican homeland. In this space they reassess histories of colonization and come to understand their family’s longstanding symbolic and social attachment to place (63–64). Through this Autohistoria-teoría, Sandoval and García not only invite us join them, but implore us to understand how such travels for them as scholars, and us as readers/scholars, bear witness to continued abuses and government-sponsored colonialism (66). They challenge us to flesh our theory into praxis with ourselves and our scholarship as witness.

From “The Political Implications of Playing Hopeful,” Kirstie Soares not only proposes “a version of queer theory and activism that combines present-based resistance and utopic creation dialectically, in which the utopic creation becomes the mechanism that guides all present-based resistance” (123). Soares’s “Political Implications of Playing Hopefully” challenges us to consider the very complicated subject positions that queer Latinas bring to cultural production and everyday life. How can we as oppressed subjects “maintain a utopic vision of the future and take concrete steps in the present to enact it?” (122). How can the hopeful creations of a utopian future that we theorize in our own scholarship be used to resist current oppressive social norms?

Of course, no collection on contemporary Latin@ cultural production would be complete without a chapter on the Chupacabras. And so, in “Sucking Vulnerability: Neoliberalism, the Chupacabras, and the Post-Cold War Years,” William A. Clavo-Quirós, a newer and innovative voice in Chican@ cultural studies, argues that the Chupacabras is more than a community myth, but instead “represents a sophisticated entity that carries within it the violent struggles lived by communities of color, because of the local impact of global neoliberal policies, as manifested by late capitalism, during the last quarter of the twentieth century” (212). Through a discussion of monsters and the monstrous, Clavo-Quirós implores us to be vigilant for

monsters and to recognize how they are “sophisticated social constructions, built from semiotic raw materials and assembled with specific scopes and objects” (211), challenging us to reconstruct the monstrous in ways that can “enact emancipatory social change” (213).

Ellie D. Hernández and Eliza Rodríguez y Gibson have brought together a rich collection of essays that showcase both established and emerging voices in Latina/o cultural criticism. While the theoretical richness of *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship* will be appreciated by established cultural studies scholars and students alike, their call for all readers to do work that matters and to speak back will also be valued by ethnic and cultural studies scholars from diverse fields. This collection is ideal for both graduate and undergraduate students who are interested in queer studies, cultural studies, pop culture, folklore, Chican@ studies, Latina/o studies, Third World feminism, neo-colonialism, and globalization. This collection would also be ideal for advertising and business majors, with the hope that the next generation of marketing professionals will eschew homogenization and listen to the diverse communities that are destined to become the new majority.

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## *Poetics of the Flesh*

Mayra Rivera (Duke University Press, 2015). 216 pp. ISBN 978-0822360131.

Reviewed by Elías Ortega-Aponte  
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We have an awareness of our bodies as objects, not merely as a thing, a material body, but as an extension of ourselves. Our bodies and their *flesh* extend to the world; they are within the world. Our bodies touch other bodies, human and non-human. They are also sometimes willing to be touched by them. To know oneself as being is, then, to be conscious of our carnal condition. This being so, how do our multi-faceted ways of being embodied matter constitute the personal enfleshment of our individual, yet co-constituted, selves?

Perhaps it is through interactions with those close to us that we learn to see, to know our self, and to perceive others as “subject” and “object” in all the complexities and fluidity of material and social lives. But those close to us are already “known” in ways unfamiliar to us. They also perceive, interact, and react to other bodies, known and strangers, in ways that we may not fully comprehend but rarely fail to internalize at least to some degree. Moreover, those bodies close to us are also perceived, interacted with, and reacted to in ways that have to be explained to us—they live, love, flourish, become ill, die, and are killed. Either through their silence or through their explanations, through laughter, dismissals, and grief provoked by ways of interactions, we are made aware by others’ ways of seeing, existing, and acting in the world. Our choices may conform or may deviate from what we have been told; regardless, one is not fully free from the entanglements of our perceptions with those of others. What is certain in all

of this, however, is that bodies are material and that their unique instantiation matters.

How is a body flesh, or how does a body become a flesh? Could body and flesh coexist within the folds of each other, or should they be kept distinct? The intellectual trajectories for understanding how bodies are or are not flesh, that is, material in and of themselves with their ontological gesturing, this may imply, or how they materialize via discursive formations, becoming subjects and objects, signifiers and signified, require complex cartographical imaginings. Mayra Rivera’s intervention in *Poetics of the Flesh* offers us a possible way forward through these complex histories, one with attention to the social consequences of ideas about bodies and their flesh.

*Poetics of the Flesh* is a three-part invitation to consider the multiplicity of ways in which embodiment is enfleshed. From body to flesh, ways of perceiving, knowing, and responding to the carnality of bodies, co-constructed in social practices of perception, have real consequences, life and death, for corporeal beings, human and non-human. This work calls for us to reckon anew with the educating practices that equip subjects with ways of interpreting and relating to the materializations of a multiplicity of bodies and the power differentials that sustain them syphoning benefits for some, dealing harm to others.

Theology’s hand in shaping perceptions and practices pertaining to body and flesh continues to touch contemporary ways of understanding corporeality. While in recent years philosophers and critical theorists have turned their attention to religious and theological texts, the writings of Paul have garnered particular attention; these interactions, more than adding light, stock the heat in the troubled relation between philosophy and theology. Often, these philosophical “re-turning to” discussions take the form of a sifting through the chaff of the religious and the theological to access particular insights taken to be buried at best, distorted at worse by theological sedimentation. Rivera charts a different route.

Rivera argues instead for a “re-tuning” of how we think about the enfleshed dimensions of being a body. In fact, she proposes thinkers such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler theorize the body in ways that miss insights of the poetics of theological discourse. Rivera challenges her interlocutors to wade with her through fragments of history and texts to engage in a creative “remaking of visions of corporeality out of pieces of shattered histories and shards of vocabulary” (4). There are insights in the poetics of theological discourses that may be lost in modern and post-modern modes of thinking and perceiving bodies. One such insight surfaces through the reflections on human vulnerability taken up by theological attuned thinkers—the fragility of corporeality requires our caring concern.

In the first part of the book, Rivera takes up the task of guiding us through ancient sacred texts like the Gospel of John, the writings of Paul, and the theological thought of Tertullian to point out not an unitarian conception of the body, but a rich and plural tradition of “the Christian body.”



There are bodies as there is flesh, and they are intertwined with each other. Taking the Gospel of John, Rivera points out that one finds in it visions of how the material and the spiritual flow into each other, that the “most metaphysical statements rely on the most concrete material dimensions of corporeality,” and thus, attempts to render bodies as solely spiritual do so at the expense of the flesh. Turning to Paul, Rivera highlights the tendency to give preeminence to the spiritual over the carnal, where the former is value and the later is to be overcome, putting in full display the power of words to shape material reality.

In contrast, Tertullian turns towards flesh, not as a thing to avoid, but as an inescapable aspect of creation worth celebrating. For Tertullian, the affirmation of the flesh is connected to his reading of the Christian narrative of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ. Thus, the flesh of the Christ was not solely spiritual, but it was also carnal. As such, for Tertullian, the flesh is blessed; a rejection of the flesh will also mean a rejection of the divine incarnation. Rivera points out that unlike the Pauline scale of being flesh, responsible for the introduction of dangerous distinctions between particular instantiation of flesh and their worth, Tertullian regarded flesh as one; there is only one flesh (51). However, Tertullian’s position is not without its problems, particularly, as Rivera highlights, the ways in which flesh becomes feminized. While Tertullian would not separate between flesh deeming some more worthy than others, his tendency was to feminize flesh in historical and religious contexts in which the female was devalued.

In the Christian tradition, the body (*soma, corpus*) has often been juxtaposed to flesh (*sarx, caro*). The visibility of bodies to those around them is to be preferred over the slipperiness of flesh. “Flesh is always becoming,” Rivera says, and we need to be attentive to the ways in which flesh enters into realm of language, the way it is circulated in various social discourses, and the shapes of social hierarchies are matters of concern. Because how we act as humans, Rivera concludes, “also affect[s] the materiality of the nonhuman world, and this in turn affects corporeal becomings. Social norms are always materializing in the physical structures we build” (2, 135). Thus, for Rivera, understanding the multivalency of body and flesh in the Christian theological tradition(s) is important to contemporary readers because it compels us to think deeply about the social dimensions of flesh. That is to say the shape of our shared world, the injustices and justice claims that are struggled over, are directly linked to our valuation of the multiplicity of flesh.

In the second part of the book, “The Philosophers’ (Christian) Flesh,” Rivera considers the return of the flesh in the work of Merleau-Ponty. She pays close attention to the phenomenological linking of bodies with the world. Merleau-Ponty turns to flesh, much like Tertullian’s treatment of the incarnation, as an affirmation of the flesh. However, unlike Tertullian, Merleau-Ponty expanded on the social justice implications of the incarnation. From her analysis of Merleau-Ponty, Rivera extracts an important distinction between two acts of embodiment: touching and seeing. “When I touch I am always, *necessarily*, touched by what I touch,” Rivera explains. Touch and being touched necessitate two tangible things. However, following

Merleau-Ponty, Rivera explains that seeing works in a different way; seeing requires something else. Through seeing, what is visible is perceived, but not touched; instead, Merleau-Ponty makes use of the notion of visibility “to name the fold between the body and the world,” and in so doing, he reframed conceptions of knowledge. Vision is not detached from world, but folded within it, and thus it is best understood as the interrelatedness between visibility and tangibility (106-7). For Rivera, while we can hold as true that “touching flesh yields no unmediated sense or knowledge,” and “the evolving multiplicity of all the elements that constitute my flesh are never fully present to me,” their social and material history leaves their mark in our bodies (110). This interlacing of vision/touch modes of perceptions and the socio-material histories of flesh are central to the final part of Rivera’s work.

In the third and final part, “A Labyrinth of Incarnations,” through reflection in the works of Fanon, Butler, Linda Alcoff, Martín, Cesaire, and Glissant, Rivera presents a compelling case for the power of words to create social reality and inform ways of cognizing the world that benefit some while impoverishing others. Words can create imaginaries of bodies and flesh, they become cultural practices, they delimit social boundaries, they have the power to shape the material environments we inhabit; “words weave the flesh of the world” (113). Rivera offers an insightful analysis of the ways race and sexuality becomes flesh. Racialized and gendered language-words shape social practices; in so doing, they functionally set constraints upon certain bodies and claim particular freedom for others. It is through “weaving the flesh of the world,” through developing bodies of intellectual ideas, stereotypes, attitudes, and fantasies about othered bodies, that habits of perceptions act as schemas to guide interpretation. Bodies become flesh to subdue, control, and utilize.

These social arrangements are tied to mutual perceptions. The ways I experience other bodies is interlaced with the experiences others have of my body. Just as Merleau-Ponty interweaved touch and vision to propose a new way of knowing, Rivera proposes that touching and being touched, being seen in certain ways as well as seeing others, shapes our capacity to respond ethically to others. The capacity for empathy towards others depends on my own incarnation (146-7). Rivera then presents to us the following challenge: “Consenting to being flesh implies accepting the social obligations that emerge from our coexistence in the flesh of the world.” Therefore, by virtue of being flesh of the world, we are to address the ways in which our co-created social arrangements distribute life and death (157).

Through the cadences, words, and silences of this text, Rivera makes a call for us to pay attention to the power of words and, more still, to be attentive to the bodies of others, to their mode of address, to their silences, and to be open to “sense the entanglements of our carnal relations” (158).

## *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led By Transgression*

Margaret Randall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). 258 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5962-3.

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In *Haydée Santamaría*, Margaret Randall seeks to paint an “impressionistic portrait” of the Cuban revolutionary from the perspective of a poet and friend (13). Randall is a U.S.-born writer who lived in Cuba for various years starting in 1969. While containing many elements of a traditional biography (e.g., Randall gives an overview of Haydée’s life, interviews her family and friends, and includes intimate photos and correspondences), this book is more of a tribute to the spirit of Haydée’s life and work. What stands out most in this account is Haydée’s support of the arts through Casa de las Américas. This cultural institution, through Haydée’s leadership, became a thriving intellectual and artistic hub not only for Cuba but for rest of Latin America and for liberationist struggles around the world.

A key figure before, during, and after Cuba’s revolution from 1953 to 1959, Haydée is someone probably less known to most North American readers for a number of reasons. First, there is the bias against any pro-revolutionary Cuban figures. Second, due to sexism, Haydée was overshadowed by other male leaders. Third, Haydée’s sudden suicide in 1980 was not necessarily well received because of communist orthodoxy’s disapproval of suicide. Randall’s book attempts to recount and solidify her importance as someone who “led by following her own exquisitely developed sense of justice, irrespective of the people she had to challenge, the rules she had to break or the ways in which she had to veer from the official line” (185).

Randall sets the stage for the history of the revolution and how Haydée became involved. In 1952, Fulgencio Batista took power through a coup and ruled Cuba as a dictator with the backing of the United States. On July 26, 1953, a young lawyer named Fidel Castro and his group of men, along with two women (one of whom was Haydée), attacked the Moncada Barracks. Even though this attack on the country’s second-largest military garrison failed, it became a foundation for the revolution. Randall shows how the Moncada event became the turning point of Haydée’s life. Drawn to Castro and the revolutionary cause through her brother Abel, Haydée would witness the gruesome deaths of both her brother and fiancé there. For the rest of her life, Haydée would struggle with bouts of depression and with what Randall thinks were symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

In spite of emotional trauma, Haydée lived with a passion, loyalty, and care which drew people, and she possessed a creativity that made her vital to the revolutionary cause. She participated in the Moncada attack and later rejoined Fidel in the mountains with Che Guevara; she smuggled weapons into Cuba and went on secret missions in the United States, all the while avoiding capture. Haydée

even managed to transport U.S. journalists to an interview with Fidel without getting detected. Indispensable in the revolutionary war, Haydée’s important cultural work began after the war when Fidel tapped her to start and direct Casa de las Américas.

Largely self-taught, Haydée was not necessarily an intellectual or theorist. Yet she became a masterful curator at Casa who attracted major talent from Latin America and throughout the world. Randall points out, “For Haydée art—all creative expression—was a form of revolution, one that feeds, reflects, stretches, strengthens, and pushes forward the struggle for justice” (23). Haydée rejected the rigid artistic style of “socialist realism” which the Soviet Union was promoting at the time. In many ways, she pushed the limits of the post-revolution society: “She promoted writing by women. She provided space to gay artists at a time when ignorance and fear prevented them from being accepted by the revolution’s reigning bureaucracy” (23). Casa de las Américas held literary contests within a vast array of genres encompassing Brazilian, Guaraní, French/Dutch/English-Antilles, indigenous, and U.S. Latina/o literatures. On a yearly basis, there were colloquiums on women’s studies, theatrical groups, concerts, and photography/print contests. Haydée had a gift for mentoring and providing guidance to creative minds. The list is impressive. Randall inserts photos, letters, and exchanges of Haydée and figures such as Gabriel García Márquez, Angela Davis, and Mercedes Sosa, to name just a few.

One correspondence that is worth sharing here is between Haydée and the poet Ernesto Cardenal. While he was contemplating returning to his home country of Nicaragua during a time of strife in 1977, Haydée wrote to him the following:

Right now it seems as if going home might endanger your life. You will have to decide what to do, in accordance with your conscience. But remember, there are times when being cautious is not a sign of cowardice but of strength, the strength each of us finds at a given time moment and in a particular circumstance. And if you feel you shouldn’t return right now, don’t forget that you, like every Latin American revolutionary, has another homeland: Cuba. And that we will always welcome you here, with open arms and hearts, in your Casa de las Américas. (136)

Haydée’s words here capture the internationalism of her Cuban politics which took flesh in Casa de las Américas and which, in time, Randall claims “came to temper the rough edges of the Cuban nationalism she too had embraced” (19).

Concerning weaknesses in Randall’s book, some may find her depiction of the revolution and Haydée to verge on hagiography. For example, she does not question or critically probe Haydée’s nearly religious devotion to Fidel. Nevertheless, Randall does not absolutely avoid addressing blemishes in the revolution either. She writes, “The revolution itself has not been perfect; it is made of human beings: brilliant, creative, courageous, and fallible”

(8). Randall recounts the “Padilla affair,” representative of a repressive period in Cuba’s post-revolutionary history in which the poet Heberto Padillo was detained by the government. Beyond this, the book occasionally gets repetitive. Ultimately, what the reader gets out of Randall’s portrait of Haydée will depend on how open he or she is to seeing another side to Cuba and how its story is told.

Setting aside various debates that can be had regarding the Cuban revolution itself and the Cuban government, *Haydée Santamaría* points to a unique epicenter of Latin American and trans-nationalist artistic and intellectual production. Hispanic/Latina/o thinkers would do well to explore or revisit this stream coming from Casa de las Américas, a stream which Randall gives us just a little taste of in the book. In looking for places that have shifted the geographies of reason, scholars might find Casa de las Américas; in finding Casa de las Américas, they will inevitably interact with the legacy of the person behind it: Haydée Santamaría.

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## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

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**Robyn Henderson-Espinoza**, self-identified Queer Mestizaje (of Mexican and Anglo heritage), earned a Ph.D. in constructive philosophical theology with a primary interest in the ethics of interrelatedness stemming from a New Materialist account. Robyn’s work exists in the in-between spaces of ontology, epistemology, and ethics, working to establish a speculatively queer material realism. Robyn uses the thought and theory of Gloria Anzaldúa in conversation with Gilles Deleuze, the New Materialisms movement, along with queer epistemologies to consider a queer materialist philosophy. Robyn’s interests, while wildly philosophical, are also at the intersection of addressing issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Robyn’s scholarly work starts at the point of departure of “What is reality?” to address existing disparities and pays careful attention to element

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