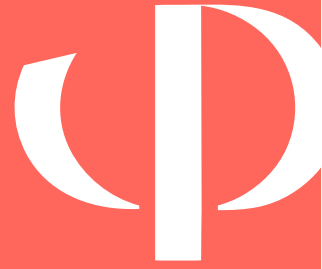


Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy



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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

LORI GALLEGOS, EDITOR

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 2 | SPRING 2022

FROM THE EDITOR

Lori Gallegos
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

It has been just over twenty years since the publication of the first issue of the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*. The early issues of the newsletter tell the story of a group of Latin American philosophers beginning to forge a collective identity, determined to create a space for Latin American philosophy within the profession. Through the launch of the newsletter, the hard-won establishment of the APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought, robust participation in APA meetings, tireless engagement with one another's work, and dedicated mentoring, these scholars are to thank for the rich and growing field that we know today.

One philosopher who figures prominently across this twenty-year history is Jorge J. E. Gracia, who passed away last July. In a Memorial Session for Gracia at the APA Eastern Division meeting this year, Eduardo Mendieta underscored the importance of Gracia's leadership—along with that of Ofelia Schutte and Linda Alcoff—in “making the APA a place within which Latin American and Latinx philosophers could do work that would be acknowledged, celebrated, and studied.” Mendieta, who was the founding editor of the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*, noted that Gracia helped to establish the endowment for the APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought. Additionally, this group of scholars worked to secure the APA's acknowledgement of Spanish as a philosophical language, adding “Latin American” and “Hispanic” philosophy to the list of recognized AOSs and AOCs on its website. Gracia was also a dedicated mentor who sought to support students so that they could both succeed in the discipline and pursue interests in Latin American and Latinx philosophy. According to Mendieta, Gracia believed that “if Latinx, Hispanic, Latin American philosophy was to get a place within the US academy, we had to train and mentor colleagues who also had to have a foot firmly planted in an orthodox, more established, discipline or tradition.” Gracia himself managed to make significant contributions to multiple fields, including in medieval philosophy.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of Gracia in our field. Manuel Vargas, one of the authors in this issue, shares, “For me, and a lot of mid-career or older philosophers working on Latin American and Latinx philosophy, Jorge Gracia was an important role model, mentor, and friend. He was one of the people who really opened up these

fields for academic philosophers, helping us see that there were topics and figures there to study, but also, that it was possible to have a career working on these things. He was also incredibly generous with his advice and time. We are massively indebted to him, and his passing is a huge loss for a community of scholars spanning all of the Americas.”

Even those of us who did not have the opportunity to work closely with Gracia have been significantly impacted by what he has accomplished in the profession. In this issue of the newsletter, we seek to honor Gracia with two articles that focus on his work. We also feature the top three papers that were submitted to the APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought, which Gracia helped to establish.

The issue begins with the winner of the 2021 Essay Prize in Latin American Thought—an essay titled “Is Latina Mestiza Identity a Being-in-Worlds?” In this award-winning essay, Ernesto Rosen Velásquez puts Mariana Ortega's Latina feminist phenomenology into conversation with the work of Afro-Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon. The essay examines the question: Does the description of marginalized lived experience as explained by Latina feminist phenomenology necessitate a radical break with existential temporality as described in the existential analytic? By taking the zone of nonbeing as a point of departure for theorizing, Velásquez shows how Fanon problematizes Ortega's proposal that Latina mestiza identity is both multiplicitous and one.

Our second essay received an Honorable Mention in the 2021 Essay Prize competition. Author Gabriel Zamosc challenges the way authors like Miguel León-Portilla and James Maffie postulate an epistemological problematic in Nahuatl thought, which they believe had its roots in the metaphysical outlook of the Nahuas. Zamosc argues that their view rests on a misreading of the poems that are the evidence from which we interpret Mesoamerican thought. Ultimately, he suggests that the Nahuas might not have had an epistemological problematic as much as they had an existential one.

Our third essay—also awarded an Honorable Mention in the 2021 Essay Prize—is written by Teófilo Reis. Reis discusses the work of Brazilian philosopher Lélia Gonzalez. The article shows how Gonzalez anticipated the idea of intersectionality when elaborating the concept of *Amefricanidade* and the idea of Afrolatinamerican feminism in the 1980s. Reis points to some of the distinctive features of Gonzalez's intersectionality, and draws our attention to the ways that Gonzalez's thought sparks dialogue with more recent works that take up the topic of intersectionality.

In the first article about Gracia's work, Manuel Vargas enters into conversation with Gracia's core writings about the following questions: "How should we think about the nature of the social identity group commonly called Latinos or Hispanics, the nature of Latina/o/x philosophy, and perhaps relatedly, of Latina/o/xs in philosophy?" The article offers a novel set of considerations for evaluating Gracia's central arguments. Vargas's conclusions are both critical and optimistic about the ideas in Gracia's work.

The second article on Gracia's thought is by Susana Nuccetelli. Nuccetelli evaluates Gracia's attempts in his later work to give a positive account for the nature of Latin American philosophy. Nuccetelli finds that although Gracia insightfully critiques competing accounts about the nature of the field, Gracia's own ethnic-philosophy account has significant limitations.

The issue concludes with a book review, written by Amy Reed-Sandoval, about Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda's *Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy*. In the review, Reed-Sandoval recounts how Díaz Cepeda draws his readers into philosophical analysis through a series of moving stories about how Social Movement Organizations in Mexico have fought to oppose grave injustices. Díaz Cepeda proposes that even when it seems that they have failed to bring about the societal transformations for which they have fought, their work contributes to the "permanent state of rebellion" that Díaz Cepeda considers vital to democratic flourishing. Reed-Sandoval questions Díaz Cepeda's wholesale dismissal of liberalism, worrying that it leads him to miss out on certain advantages of liberal egalitarianism, like minority rights. Still, she concludes that the book is a "major contribution to Latin American philosophy." She also tells us that the book offers us a healing dose of hope, "helping us to dream of a better future and a better world at a perilous time."

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* is accepting contributions for the fall 2022 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 meditaciones, book reviews, and interviews. Please prepare articles for anonymous review.

SPECIAL CLUSTER ON RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN
 Ricardo Flores Magón (1873–1922) was one of the most important Mexican philosophers of the early twentieth century. Although he is often thought of as more of a political activist than a philosopher, his thought had more impact than that of many of his contemporaries, since it inspired the Mexican Revolution. To mark the one hundredth anniversary of his death, we invite the submission of articles that address the philosophical thought of Flores Magón. Contributions may be submitted in either English or Spanish.

ARTICLES

All submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All essay 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.

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 fall issue is May 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, Lori Gallegos, at LoriGallegos@txstate.edu, Department of Philosophy, Comal Building 102, Texas State University, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666.

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.

ARTICLES

Is Latina Mestiza Identity a Being-in-Worlds?

Winner, 2021 APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought

Ernesto Rosen Velásquez
 UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Mariana Ortega recently asked an important question in Latinx philosophy. Does the description of marginalized lived experience as explained by Latina feminist phenomenology necessitate a radical break with existential temporality as described in the existential analytic?¹ Her answer to this question seems to be no. As she says, "An account that explains a self's having various pasts because one is a multi-cultural being who consequently cannot claim an unproblematic single history (if anyone can) does not *necessitate* a radicalization of existential temporality."² This is because if it did, in the sense that the multiplicitous

self has multiple temporalities corresponding to multiple histories, we still need answers to questions of agency, self, memory, history, etc. for Ortega. As she says, “My appeal to existential temporality has to do with my concern with being able to answer questions regarding complex notions of agency, self, memory, history, etc.”³ If the self were merely multiplicitous and lacked existential continuity, then the self’s experiences would be rendered merely unrelated atomistic moments. Thus, for Ortega, Latina mestiza identity is both multiplicitous and one—not in the sense of a unified self with an undisrupted single history—but as existential continuity in Heidegger’s sense of a being that projects itself into the future while being mindful of the present and carrying a past. This entwining between the past, present, and future is the sense in which *Dasein* exists. Temporality is a fundamental ontological feature of being human for Ortega and Heidegger. A second basic ontological feature of being is the sense of mineness that arises from the temporality of being. Mineness refers to the immediate attunement as to how one is faring in a particular world. Ortega offers a helpful example to illustrate. “I sit here typing, I am aware of my own being and that it is me who is writing these words. In other words, as existing, making choices and carrying out numerous activities.”⁴ Mineness is a part of experience that involves being aware of oneself and how I am faring in the particular worlds. This being in time is also thrown in the world in the sense that it is in self-other relations. Thrownness is a third fundamental ontological feature of being that is in part a response to Cartesian dualism where the solitary thinking subject creates a distance between itself and the world. Thrownness takes for granted being is already in the world. Ortega finds the non-linear temporality and relationality of Heidegger’s sense of being useful for understanding Latina phenomenology, especially when she mixes Heidegger’s notion of being with Lugones’s notion of worlds and proposes that a Latina is a being-in-worlds.⁵ Ortega’s notion of oneness as existential continuity involves these three notions of temporality, mineness, and thrownness. It helps Ortega answer concerns of agency, self, memory, and history that can become complicated in light of a Latina mestiza self that is multiplicitous and experiences ruptures regularly in their lives.

Ortega discusses two distinct though related kinds of ruptures—a thin sense of not-being-at-ease and a thick sense of not-being-at-ease. The former uneasiness has to do with not knowing the norms or sharing a history with those in a particular context. She gives the example of her eating cake with a spoon in the US and receiving odd looks for engaging in a common practice with utensils in Nicaraguan culture. An everyday banal practice thus makes her into a foreign object where she now has to become conscious of her bodily actions in space as she faces this dominant gaze. These ruptures in everyday norms lead to a more reflective being in a particular world. The latter ruptures are different. A thick sense of not-being-at-ease involves not only not knowing the norms and lacking a shared sense of history in a particular world but also involves the “experience of being confused about what kind of person that I am”⁶ because character central traits are involved. An example Ortega discusses is Lugones’s discussion of being playful in the Latina world and serious in the world of US whites.

When one considers these traits as simultaneously inhering oneself, it gives rise to the following question: What am I really? Am I serious, playful, both, or neither? While I do not go over the different answers Lugones and Ortega offer with respect to this question, it does bear mentioning that for Ortega the thin and thick senses of not-being-at-ease do not entail a radical disruption of existential continuity. The Heideggerian being is still there even while experiencing thin and thick ruptures for Ortega. But does Ortega’s notion of a thick sense of not-being-at-ease account for the lived experience of racial dehumanization in which one’s lived experience does not involve being confused about what kind of person one is but a deeper dimension that is below the thick sense of not-being-at-ease, about whether one is in fact a person to begin with? Ortega’s initial question at the outset returns: Do racialized others lived experiences of dehumanization necessitate a break with Heidegger’s notion of being?

An earlier philosopher who answers Ortega’s question with a yes is the Afro-Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon notes in his critique of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, “There is a ‘being for the other’ as described by Hegel, but any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and civilized society.”⁷ As this quote indicates, it is the racial colonial situation that partitions people along the distinct yet fluid colonizer/colonized distinction that makes any ontology inadequate. While Fanon offers many reasons as to why ontology needs to be left aside not only in *Black Skin, White Masks* but *A Dying Colonialism, Les Damnés de La Terre* and *Toward an African Revolution*, I focus on the first since there he offers a substantial critical engagement with existential phenomenology, ontology, and other disciplines in that book.⁸ Specifically, I note three features of the lived experience of black colonized people Fanon identifies that problematize the Heideggerian notion of being Ortega uses in her hybrid notions of being-in-worlds and being-in-between-worlds that are part of her Latina phenomenology: defuturing, diminishing mineness, and invisibility that positions them below self-other relations in a zone of nonbeing.

In a context of racial colonialism, Fanon identifies at least three kinds of identities that colonized black people adopt in response to navigating this situation: the simply human identity, the lactification identity, and black identity. While the first two identities go wrong in interesting ways, I focus on his affirmation of blackness in the face of a white colonial gaze. This is when the colonized Afro-Caribbean subject decides that if the other does not recognize him as a human, as an Other, even when learning French, marrying white Frenchmen, or having sexual relations with white Parisian women, then the only recourse is “to make myself known.”⁹ “I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an *inborn complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN.”¹⁰ In a context where racial myths about blacks exist—that they are R eating monsters, rapists, hypersexualized, open vaginas, big dicks, savage, morons, illiterate, and evil—taking up a black identity must involve destroying these and other racial myths and their underlying binaries at all costs.¹¹ This is because the fact of blackness consists in experiences of invisibility that involve non-reciprocal interactions with white gazes that deny their humanity once their black body

enters their visual registry. Odd experiences of non-contact occur in which one's mineness diminishes. The damned thinks, I am aware of the denial of my humanity and that the other does not see me. The other is interacting with something else—a caricature that is a projection of white anxieties and fears.

While Fanon works to dissolve the racial myths in the environment, he struggles to demolish the colonial racial Manichean divide from a black perspective, "from the opposite end of the white world a magical Negro culture was hailing me."¹² Fanon feels hailed by the Negritude movement and is flushed with black pride as he acknowledges black sculpture, art, music, poetry, history, and culture, which at its base is founded on rhythm. To assert himself as a black man is to be in part intuitive, rhythmic, up to the neck in the irrational, poetic, and emotional. "Was this our salvation?"¹³ Fanon asks. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, he threw himself back toward unreason. This rhythmic, tribal black identity is unique. "Only the Negro has the capacity to convey it, to decipher its meaning, its import."¹⁴ As Fanon grounds his black identity in intuition, sensitivity, and a rhythmic attitude, he feels rehabilitated. He is not a Negro but the Negro. In this moment of black celebration and triumph, the white man is rocked back "by a force that he could not identify, so little used as he is to such reactions."¹⁵ Fanon is making an observation during this affirmation of his black identity by noting this identity strategy as a reaction. "It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude."¹⁶ There is a sense of passivity and imitation in this affirmation of black difference for Fanon. As he affirms Negritude with his fist in the air, Fanon mentions three objections that emerge from a racial white colonial gaze.

First, this tribal, rhythmic black identity represents humanity at its lowest. "Black Magic, primitive mentality, animism, animal eroticism, it all floods over me. All of it is typical of peoples that have not kept pace with the evolution of the human race. Or, if one prefers, this is humanity at its lowest."¹⁷ The colonial gaze assumes a linear developmental progression of time in which black ethno-cultural identity is relegated either outside of history as nonhuman or back in primitive history as subhuman. These positionalities on the linear developmental timeline are due to a constellation of Western hierarchies—rhythm/reason, intuitive/rational, irrational/rational, poetic/scientific, cult/religion, etc.—based on a human/nonhuman and/or subhuman binary and concomitant spatial grid of primitive and civilized societies.

Fanon initially responds by continuing to affirm blackness and taking some of the derogatory terms employed in the objection and they are made positive. "Yes, we—Negroes—backward, simple, free in our behavior. That is because for us the body is not something opposed to what you call mind."¹⁸ Black people have an emotional sensitivity. "Emotion is completely Negro as reason is Greek."¹⁹ Fanon inverts Western binaries when he questions the authority of the top pole of Westernized binaries. What value is intelligence or philosophy when both have produced misery and oppression? In order to show black people are not outside history or in an early stage of human development, Fanon frenetically rummages through all

of antiquity and finds the black. He does so by turning to the white French writer and abolitionist who fought to end slavery in the French Caribbean Victor Schoelcher and others who made it possible for Fanon to find a valid historic place and show the white colonial gaze was wrong. He was not nonhuman or subhuman. He was part of a historical tradition tied to Egyptian civilization, people who worked gold and silver thousands of years ago, had majestic architecture, governed empires, created cities, had agricultural methods, weaved, had religion, customs based on kindness, unity, and respect for age. They had science, art, mythology, monuments, hospitals, a whole lifeworld that shows that European civilization is just one civilization among many other civilizations and not the most merciful. In this moment, Fanon not only provides a grounding for black identity but also situates that identity within African history. Fanon felt in this moment of ontological resistance that he had put the white man back in his place, and he felt a growing sense of boldness. Fanon shouted with laughter at the stars. Fanon saw the white man was resentful—How dare the black subject, after we trained you, now look at what you do, is this how you repay us? That moment of resentment on the white man's face is white man's reaction time lagged. In that silence Fanon says, "I had won. I was jubilant."²⁰

A second objection emerges. "Lay aside your history, your investigations of the past, and try to feel yourself into our rhythm. In a society such as ours, industrialized to the highest degree, dominated by scientism, there is no longer room for your sensitivity."²¹ The historical location of Egyptian civilization is now viewed as a golden age in a past long gone and that has been overtaken and superseded by Western European civilization with its industrialization and science. The fact of the present dominance of science and industrialization and technology is proof that the black values, customs, knowledge, and history Fanon excavated do not matter much now. African history becomes submerged. Science, logic, and math are the engines that move history forward. They do the real work. When white exhaustion occurs from using real reason and not emotional sensitivity, they will turn to black bodies as they do to their children. Blacks represent the childhood of the world from a colonial white gaze. Locked in perpetual childhood, black colonized subjects will provide whites relief, humor, and entertainment. A brief escape from the tough world forged by white men who have to carry the burden of moving history forward. At this point Fanon sees that every affirmation of blackness is a losing hand for him and in the midst of this awareness, he notes a third objection.

Fanon's affirmation of negritude is merely a minor term in a dialectic. In other words, the thesis of whiteness is in struggle with the antithesis of blackness. If blackness is the antithesis, then it is in a passive relation to the thesis in the sense blackness defines, constructs and affirms itself in reaction to whiteness. If whiteness values reason, then blackness values emotion. If whiteness prioritizes logic, blackness prioritizes poetry. Can blackness define, construct, and affirm its identity independently of whiteness, in an actional and not reactional fashion? For every Western hierarchical binary of mind/body, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, blackness merely valorizes the

bottom pole of the binary and shows how the top pole of the hierarchy is limited. Furthermore, the logic of the binary reproduces itself. Just as whiteness is approached in a way that homogenize races—all whites are intelligent and superior, and all blacks are dumb and inferior—blackness is also conceived in an essentialist fashion—emotional sensitivity is possessed only by blacks, or only blacks can understand the meaning of Louis Armstrong, the blues, and the rhythmic core of the universe. Even though Fanon is attempting to break the backbone of the racial/sexual colonial structure by adopting a black identity for Sartre, he is engaging in a form of anti-racist racism because he construes blackness according to a racist logic that homogenizes races. Thus, Fanon's affirmation of negritude ends up reproducing logics of the binaries—imitating Western essentialist logics in the process of identifying himself as distinct from whiteness—and merely inverts Western binaries. Fanon notes, "Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for me to live my Negrohood. Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned."²² Because the black past, present, and future belong to Western Europeans in the sense that their standards of evaluation place black phenomena in various positions along a linear developmental upward track, the damned is not only defutured, their history is submerged and the present skews. At this point Fanon begins to cry. This kind of cry is a political expression that draws attention to the radical injustice of the situation he is in, and it draws attention to the suffering body produced by the racial colonial environment.

When the damned of the earth are taken as a point of departure for philosophizing a fundamental phenomenological feature of the lived experience of black colonized people, they are not a being or simply a nothingness but in a zone of nonbeing. This is a position which "in most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell."²³ Folks in the zone of nonbeing lack the opportunity to descend into hell because as Lewis Gordon points out, blacks already live in hell on earth.²⁴ Death is not as an event in the future that we evade when the human being is à la Heidegger inauthentic and then moves towards authenticity when we remain resolute when confronting our unique death. Death in the zone of nonbeing is always near at hand because the racist colonial environment makes black bodies disposable and, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres notes, rapeable and killable.²⁵ Because the racist colonial context works to kill them with impunity, they are defutured. With their local cultural originality dead and buried through colonization, access to their past is also complicated. With an unclear, distorted, denigrated, covered over past and no bright flourishing future in sight, they do not exist in Heidegger's sense of being. This is partly why Fanon says, "Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black."²⁶ These are some reasons why descriptions of the lived experience of colonized people necessitate a break with the existential temporality in Heidegger's notion of being. De-futuring, diminished mineness, and invisibility below self-other relations are not ontological features of being, but as Nelson Maldonado-Torres has identified, subontological features of colonized people in the zone of

nonbeing. Even so, Ortega could still follow up by asking how the zone of nonbeing answers complex questions pertaining to agency, memory, history, etc. I address these questions at another time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Mariana Ortega for allowing me to attend, present, and learn from her and the many bright folks at the Roundtable on Latina feminism over the years. Were it not for that welcoming and engaging space, this piece would not have been possible. I also appreciate her thoughtful comments on this paper. I also wish to thank the APA Committee on Hispanic/Latinxs for considering this work as valuable. I also thank my advisor, colleague, and *amigo* who recently passed away, Jorge J. E. Gracia. Thank you, Jorge, for being the founding member of the APA Committee on Hispanic/Latinxs in 1991 and for helping create the APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought. Were it not for your work, I and the other previous award recipients would not have enjoyed the honor of receiving this award. This one is for you! We all thank you from down here.

NOTES

1. Mariana Ortega, "In-Between Worlds and Re-membering: Latina Feminist Phenomenology and the Existential Analytic of *Dasein*," *Philosophy Today* 65, no. 2 (2021): 455. Ortega considers this question after it is raised in a commentary offered by Jennifer Gammage. For the discussion of Ortega's view, see Gammage, "Not-Being-at-Ease: Ortega on Heidegger's *Unheimlichkeit* and Anzaldua's Coatlicue State," *Philosophy Today* 65, no. 2, (2021): 441–48.
2. Ortega, "In-Between Worlds and Re-membering," 455.
3. Ortega, "In-Between Worlds and Re-membering," 457, fn.8.
4. Marian Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016), 80.
5. Ortega identifies other fundamental features of Latina mestiza identity: it is situated, experiences in-betweenness or what Anzaldua calls *nepantla* and tolerates ambiguity and contradiction. I do not analyze these and other features of her Latina phenomenology in this paper but in a manuscript. Here I note how Ortega uses some of Heidegger's notions to make sense of the lived experience of Latinas.
6. Ortega, *In-Between*, 82.
7. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1952), 82.
8. For philosophers who have fleshed out Fanon's critique of ontology and other themes in Fanon, see Lewis Gordon, *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanity Books, 1995); Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, ed. Lewis Gordon (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); Lewis Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views From the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
9. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 95.
10. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 87.
11. This becomes a gargantuan task given the varieties of racism—anti-black racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, etc.—and given that the problem is not merely about stereotypes but that these representations have become reality.
12. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 93.

13. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 93.
14. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 94.
15. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 97.
16. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 47.
17. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 96.
18. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 96.
19. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 96.
20. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 96.
21. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 100.
22. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 106.
23. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 2.
24. Lewis Gordon, "Through the Hellish Zone of Nonbeing: Thinking Through Fanon, Disaster and the Damned of the Earth," *Human Architecture: The Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (2007): 10.
25. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2-3 (2007): 255.
26. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 82.

Reconsidering the Epistemological Problematic of Nahua Philosophy

Honorable Mention, 2021 APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought

Gabriel Zamosc

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

My aim in this paper is to raise some concerns about efforts by scholars like León-Portilla and, especially, Maffie to recover and reconstruct important aspects of the philosophical outlook of Aztec thought and culture.¹ More specifically, I will criticize their attempt to read off, from the extant Nahuatl poetry, an epistemological problematic that they think had its roots in the metaphysical outlook of the Nahuas.²

The discussion on this topic revolves around the Nahuatl definition of *neltiliztli*, a term that is standardly translated as "truth." Although the views of these interpreters do not align completely, they both share the conviction that *neltiliztli* should not be understood through the dominant Western framework that—influenced by the Cartesian problematic of securing a genuine connection between mental representations and the way the world really is—tends to interpret the notion of truth in terms of correspondence theory. According to such theory, some X—usually some mental item like a belief or a proposition—is true if and only if the descriptive content of X succeeds in corresponding to or matching the way the world really is.³

Given the metaphysical outlook of the Nahuas, which conceives of the world as being in perpetual flux, understanding *neltiliztli* as "truth" in this standard (Western) way, runs the risk of erasing the unique epistemological meanings that the term had for them; meanings that are more properly associated with the idea of something being "firmly or well-rooted." After all, as León-Portilla explains, "the

word 'truth' in Nahuatl, *neltiliztli*, is derived from the same radical as 'root', *tla-nél-huatl*, from which, in turn, comes *nel-huáyotl*, 'base' or 'foundation'. The stem syllable *nel* has the original connotation of solid firmness or deeply rooted. With this etymology 'truth', for the Nahuas, was to be identified with well-grounded stability."⁴ Set against the background of a processive metaphysics that allegedly impresses some kind of "illusory" quality on empirical existence in general, this etymology suggests to these writers that *neltiliztli* must preclude notions of correspondence and should be instead understood to consist in apprehending reality in a more stable, more genuine, and well-grounded way.⁵

While León-Portilla does not develop an epistemological theory out of these considerations, his analysis does seem to suggest that a kind of epistemological problematic can be attributed to the Nahuas, but one that should be interpreted principally along an ontological axis: for the Nahuas the philosophical problem of truth consisted in finding a stable basic principle for both man and the universe in some other, more real metaphysical realm that is not subject to instability and change.⁶ The mantle of articulating a problematic that is more clearly epistemological is picked up by Maffie, who argues that—pace León-Portilla—for the Nahuas the problem was not really to access a different and truer ontologically realm, but rather to perceive this reality more genuinely given that we systematically misperceive it in everyday life because of the deceptive quality of *teotl*, the animating principle that the Nahuas believed continuously transforms itself in a self-generating and self-regenerating process that is responsible for creating and sustaining all of reality.⁷

In what follows I will problematize these readings, focusing mostly on Maffie's account, but doing so in a way that carries over to León-Portilla's arguments and, in general, to those defended by commentators who wish to extract epistemological lessons from the concept of *neltiliztli* to advance non-Western theories that can rival the supposedly dominant model furnished by correspondence theory.⁸

Before I raise my worries, however, let me briefly say something about the nature of the evidence from which we interpret Mesoamerican thought. This evidence consists mainly of some fifteen extant Mesoamerican codices on which were drawn paintings and glyphs that the Nahua sages and poets would interpret by a process of following with their eyes—usually during ritual—the sequence of characters and paintings depicted, while they recited or said their meanings out loud. During the colonial era these pictographic texts or song-poems became committed into linear alphabetic writing with the help of indigenous translators and informants under the supervision of Spanish friars. Many questions can be raised about the legitimacy and reliability of the testimony these texts provide to those who wish to draw lessons from them concerning the content and form of Mesoamerican cultures.⁹ But this is not really the source of my contention with interpreters of Nahua epistemology. Accordingly, I will assume that the translated texts in question are reliable enough for us to productively use them in our reconstructions of Nahua philosophy.¹⁰ My criticism will focus instead on the interpretations that have been made of some of these texts and the assumptions

that underlie them. So that we can have a referent for the discussion that follows, allow me to cite some of the song-poems that both León-Portilla and Maffie rely on to advance their interpretations of Nahua philosophy.¹¹

e.g.1:

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

e.g.2:

*Is there perchance any truth to our words here?
All seems so like a dream, only do we rise from
sleep,
only on earth do our words remain.*

e.g.3:

*So has it been said by Tochiuitzin,
so has it been said by Coyolchiuhqui:
It is not true, it is not true
that we come to this earth to live.
We come only to sleep, only to dream.
Our body is a flower.
As grass becomes green in the springtime,
so our hearts will open, and give forth buds,
and then they wither.
So did Tochiuitzin say.*

e.g.4:

*We only rise from sleep,
we come only to dream,
it is not true, it is not true,
that we come on earth to live.
As an herb in springtime,
so is our nature.
Our hearts give birth, make sprout,
the flowers of our flesh.
Some open their corollas,
then they become dry.*

e.g.5:

*We say nothing true here, Giver of Life,
But speak only as from dreams,
from which we shall soon awaken;
we tell the truth to no one here.
....
We tell the truth to no one here.
The Giver of Life mocks us.
We express only a dream, oh friend;
Our heart knows—
In truth, He, God, mocks us.*

Both Maffie and León-Portilla interpret dream-talk in these texts as indicating that, for the Nahuas, everyday life was deceptive or illusory.¹² As mentioned above, León-Portilla takes this to signal that concern with *neltiliztli* (truth) revolved around the need to gain access to a different, more

real metaphysical realm from which an enduring truth could be secured. Maffie rejects this kind of reading principally for foisting onto Nahua philosophy a dualist ontology that, he believes, a careful consideration of the evidence belies. For Maffie the metaphysical commitments of the Nahuas are more properly understood to have been monistic and pantheistic: all reality is composed of a single, dynamic, eternally self-generating and perpetually changing sacred power or force that the Nahuas called *teotl*.¹³

However, since he acknowledges that the song-poems appear to relegate everyday life to the status of being dreamlike and illusory, Maffie is forced to find a way to account for the ostensive dualism that employment of the dream metaphor apparently invokes. Because ontological monism does not admit the existence of a plurality of things, it cannot relegate illusion to an inferior grade of reality. Accordingly, the solution is to give these concepts an epistemological significance. As Maffie puts it, “Nahua *tlamatinime* [sages] employed the concepts of dreamlikeness and illusion as epistemological categories in order to make the epistemological claim that the natural condition of humans is to be deceived by *teotl*’s disguise and misunderstand *teotl*.”¹⁴ In this way, the dreamlike quality of everyday life becomes a function of how humans perceive the single, undifferentiated reality around them: this illusory quality springs from our perceptual judgments and interpretations, from our *de dicto* perceptions of the world; i.e., from our perceiving the world under a description—as seeing a tree, or a house, or a person, and so on. Strictly speaking, none of those *de dicto* perceptions are correct—hence their illusory, dreamlike status—since, in each of those instances, we are always perceiving only one and the same thing, namely, *teotl*. Because we cannot help but perceive *teotl* under some description, we seem condemned to constantly misapprehend *teotl* in ordinary experience. As Maffie succinctly puts it, “[human beings] perceive and conceive *teotl*’s *nahual* (self-disguise) and consequently perceive and conceive *teotl* in a manner that is *ahnelli*—i.e. untrue, unrooted, inauthentic, unconcealing, and nondisclosing. It is humans’ misperceiving and misunderstanding *teotl* as its disguise (*nahual*) which prevents them from seeing *teotl* (reality) as it really is.”¹⁵

For Maffie, then, the epistemological problematic of the Nahuas consisted in trying to secure a firmly rooted disclosure of the undifferentiated, processive nature of reality. *Neltiliztli*—the opposite of dreamlikeness or illusion—is about genuinely disclosing *teotl* by coming to experience it directly and not under a description: “Nahua epistemology claims the only way for humans to experience *teotl* knowingly is to experience *teotl* sans description. Humans know *teotl* by means of a mystical-style union between their hearts and *teotl* that enables them to know *teotl* directly and immediately (i.e., without recourse to or mediation by language, concepts, or categories).”¹⁶ Ritual, which included practices of self-sacrifice and the performance of song-poems, allowed the Nahua philosophers to obtain true cognition by facilitating the kind of mystical union in which they became well-rooted in *teotl* and enabled *teotl* to disclose itself directly to them.

Against this account of Nahua epistemology, it can be said, first, that it is not obvious that attempting to interpret *neltiliztli* as firmly rooted disclosure completely eschews the kind of considerations animating correspondence accounts of truth. After all, if the fundamental problem of Nahua epistemology is to perceive *teotl* as it really is, and not as it disguises itself as being, then it is hard to see how that concern does not translate itself into the desire to match the mind's experience or perception of the world with the way the world truly is—in this case, processive. Part of Maffie's reasoning for arguing that *neltiliztli* is better translated as well-rooted disclosure and not correspondence is that reality, for the Nahuas, is an undifferentiated processive totality that lacks the kind of "worldly things" that could serve as the requisite truth-makers in a correspondence relation. For the Nahuas, *teotl* does not really consist of discrete facts, state-of-affairs, structures, or the like, and to the extent that we are perceiving such objects we are in fact misperceiving *teotl*. Consequently, Maffie thinks that, metaphysically speaking, there seems to be nothing that our beliefs or sentences could correspond to or indeed represent.¹⁷ But, pace Maffie, there still *is* something in this worldview that can serve as truth-maker and to which our mental experience can correspond: namely, *teotl* itself, in all its undifferentiated, processive splendor. The mere fact that our direct experience of *teotl* cannot be captured semantically or that it must not be mediated by words and categories (since doing so would amount to perceiving *teotl* under some description and, hence, misperceiving it), does not belie the need to ensure that the mental states in which it is to be encoded or experienced *must match* the way the world truly is, which just amounts to the need to secure a correspondence between the perceiving mind and reality. To obtain true cognition by enabling *teotl* to disclose itself directly and authentically *is* to match my experience of *teotl*'s well-rooted disclosure with the way the world truly is.

However, in truth, my qualm with these interpreters is not really about whether they succeed in articulating a noncorrespondence notion of *neltiliztli*. My real worry reaches a bit deeper and has to do with whether we are even entitled in the first place to read off any kind of epistemological concerns from the song-poems in question. For even if we are successful in cashing out a noncorrespondence epistemological problematic associated with *neltiliztli*, the reality is that this whole view rests on an interpretation of "dream-talk" in Nahua poetry that might have been foreign to the way the Nahuas felt about dreams or the associations that "dream-talk" naturally conjured up for them.

In our modern imagination employment of the dream metaphor to suggest a resemblance between our waking life and the imaginings of the mind during sleep is usually meant to convey the idea that there is an "illusory" quality to our everyday experience; that what we take to be real might in fact more closely resemble the *unrealities* and *fancies* of the imagination that are the stuff of dreams. This was certainly the impetus behind Descartes's use of the dream metaphor in his *Meditations* to suggest that perhaps all our experience is nothing but the elaborate dream an evil demon has dreamt up for us; or as Calderón de la

Barca put it more poetically in his famous play, "La Vida es Sueño" (Life is a Dream): "that all life is a dream, and dreams themselves are a dream." But while this association is well-cemented in our modern imagination, we are not entitled to project it into the mind of the ancient Nahuas. When the Nahuas compare waking life to a dream in their song-poems they need not have intended to convey the notion that our everyday experience is in any way deceptive or illusory: not in the ontological way León-Portilla has in mind, nor in the more properly epistemological way that Maffie proposes. And, consequently, *neltiliztli* might not be about true cognition or the proper disclosure of reality, well-grounded or otherwise. In fact, it might not be about cognizing reality at all.

But if not illusion or deception, what significance could the dream metaphor have had for the Nahua mind, and what difference would that make to the philosophical lessons we might be able to extract from these song-poems? Let me suggest two aspects of dreams that might have been part of the associations that the dream metaphor in these song-poems was meant to elicit. The first is that dreaming is the state in which we are "awakened" to a kind of conscious life during sleep. Falling asleep involves the natural and complete suspension of consciousness, which is why we are not able to remember what happens to us while we are asleep and why sleeping is often associated with death. But in dreams our conscious mind becomes active again in a way that we can, and often do, remember. Thus, when the song-poems suggest that life is like a dream they might have simply intended to convey the idea that coming into existence is like the process in which the mind is aroused into conscious activity from its senseless, unconscious state of sleep. After all, in both cases (dreaming and existing) the person is brought out of a passive nothingness—in the case of existence, the nothingness of nonbeing—into a kind of active somethingness.

The other aspect of dreams that might have been especially salient to the Nahuas has to do with the peculiar quality that this state of conscious activity, for the most part, has for those who experience it: namely, that it seems haphazard, random, unorganized, and lacking a clear meaning. Thus, another way in which life is like a dream is that we come into existence without a clear purpose and unable to ascertain why we are going through the motions of living or even in what way we should do so. When the poets claim that we say nothing true here and that we come only to dream, or when they appear to complain that the Giver of Life mocks us because he has given us an existence that expresses only a dream, they might be intending to convey the notion that life is not just fleeting and short, but also lacking any coherence and purpose.

Interpreting the song-poems with these associations in mind suggests that more than setting up an *epistemological* problematic for the Nahuas, dream-talk seems to have been intended to convey an *existential* one instead. If all life is like a dream because it consists of conscious activity that lacks organization and meaning, then the problematic surrounding *neltiliztli* was not that of cognizing the world correctly, but that of finding a way to make the world well-grounded and stable by giving life meaning, direction,

coherence, and the like. It seems to me that this reading not only jibes well with the etymology of *neltiliztli*, but also with other features of this word that commentators like Maffie often highlight to advance their epistemological readings. For instance, noting that *neltiliztli* applies equally to persons, objects, and utterances, Maffie argues that it is incompatible with correspondence theory, since it makes no sense to speak of a person or an object corresponding to the way things really are.¹⁸ I agree, but not because *neltiliztli* is better understood as epistemic well-rooted disclosure of truth—as Maffie wants us to believe—rather, perhaps it is because *neltiliztli* is about impressing meaning and significance (also, enduring stability) to the things that lack them. People, objects, utterances, and the like start out being chaotic, senseless, and not at all well-rooted on this earth, but they can acquire coherence and become well-rooted through the sorts of practices—usually sacrificial—recommended by the Nahuatl sages.¹⁹ In these practices, the truth of the objects is not in question; what is in question is how they fit into a system of meanings and purposes that impresses said objects with significance.

In conclusion, interpreters should tread more carefully when trying to imagine what epistemological concerns might have animated the thought of Nahuatl poets in order not to import their own unwarranted associations into the metaphorical analysis that engagement with these sources necessarily requires. In our efforts to recover and legitimize forgotten and marginalized philosophies such as that of the Nahuas—efforts that I judge to be appropriate—we must guard against getting too carried away with our speculations. While Nahuatl culture is clearly animated by philosophical concerns, it is by no means necessary to imagine that they must encompass all the traditional, paradigmatic branches of philosophical inquiry. In the end, the Nahuas might have been less concerned with the epistemological problem of how to cognize the world correctly than they were with the existential one of how to give their fleeting and senseless lives some stability and meaning.

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NOTES

1. See Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind*, trans. J. E. Davis (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); and James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding the World in Motion* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2014); J. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?: Veritism and Nahuatl Philosophy," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32, no. 1, (2002): 71–91; and "Aztec Philosophy," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-002, accessed 2021, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>.
2. The Aztecs were one of the many Nahuatl-speaking groups of people that inhabited the great Valley of Mexico and its environs. Prior to colonial times they had managed to build an empire that stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, and were, thus, the most dominant Nahuatl group at the time of the Spanish conquest. Since the reflections that follow have to do with Nahuatl culture broadly construed, I will be referring principally to the Nahuas and to Nahuatl philosophy.
3. I am giving a very simple and narrow definition here. There is, of course, a rich debate about how to understand correspondence theory. Some of this debate is usefully summarized in places like the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. See David Marian, "The Correspondence Theory of Truth," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/truth-correspondence/>.
4. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 8.
5. Here is León-Portilla: "convinced of the transitory nature of all things existing on earth and of the dreamlike quality of life, the *tlamatinime's* [the Nahuatl philosopher's] approach to the truth couldn't have been the Aristotelian 'identification of the mind who knows with existing reality'" (*Aztec Thought and Culture*, 75-76).
6. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 8; and 71–79.
7. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?" 75–77.
8. For another example of this approach, see Philip T. L. Mack, "Should a Concept of Truth Be Attributed to Nahuatl Thought? Preserving 'the Colonial Difference' between Concepts of the West and Nahuatl Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (2015): 11–15.
9. Miguel León-Portilla, "Have We Really Translated the Mesoamerican 'Ancient World'?" *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. B. Swann (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); Cf. Alejandro Santana, "Did the Aztecs do Philosophy?" *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 8, no. 1, (2008): 2–9.
10. In "Have We Really Translated the Mesoamerican 'Ancient World'?" León-Portilla discusses some of these worries and defends the view that we can be confident that the texts in question have reliably translated at least part of the worldview of ancient Mesoamerica.
11. Of the following, the first three samples of song-poems can be found in León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 7, 71, and 72, respectively; I have complemented these with a couple more examples taken from Miguel León-Portilla and Earl Shorris, *In the Language of the Kings: an Anthology of Mesoamerican Literature—Pre-Columbian to the Present*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 78 and 93-94, respectively.
12. Maffie appears to have tempered somewhat his position, arguing that we are not entitled to interpret dream-talk in these song-poems as implying that the Aztecs regarded dreams as by definition unreal, illusory, false, or untrustworthy (Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy and Culture*, 59–62). For Maffie this reading betrays a Western prejudice which, under the influence of our scientific understanding, sees the content of dreams as unreal. Such understanding of dreams need not have been part of the Nahuatl mind. Thus, Maffie prefers in the end to see the function of dreams in these song-poems as "a trope for that which is obscure and mysterious—not for that which is unreal" (*Aztec Philosophy and Culture*, 62). Still, since in this work he continues to uphold the view that the epistemological problem of the Nahuas was that human beings systematically misperceive reality or *teotl* (*Aztec Philosophy and Culture*, 40–42) and, thus—as he has argued elsewhere—that their epistemological challenge consisted in attempting to perceive *teotl* more genuinely through ritual, it seems as if Maffie would be probably still inclined to see the mysterious or obscure quality being reference by dream-talk in these song-poems as indicating that everyday life has the character of being, in some sense, *misleading or deceptive* and, to that extent, still *illusory*. In any case, this is certainly the interpretation Maffie gives to Nahuatl dream-talk in the other works I will be referencing below.
13. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?"; and "Aztec Philosophy." For his more detailed defense of this view, see Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy*.
14. Maffie, "Aztec Philosophy," 6.
15. Maffie, "Aztec Philosophy," 7.
16. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?" 78.

17. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?" 79.
18. Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?" 82.
19. On the centrality of the sacrificial paradigm for organizing the cultural universe and practices of the Aztecs, see Kay A. Read, "The Fleeting Moment: Cosmogony, Eschatology, and Ethics in Aztec Religion and Society," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 1, (1986): 113–38.

Lélia Gonzalez, *Philosopher of Intersectionality*

Honorable Mention, 2021 APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought

Teófilo Reis

THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY AND UNIVERSITY OF CAMPINAS, BRAZIL

Since Kimberlé Crenshaw's coining of the phrase "intersectionality," the concept became a fundamental one in many strands of feminist thinking and other areas of knowledge. As it frequently happens, the idea long predates the concept. Indeed, the academic literature is rife with examples of early appearances of reasonings inviting intersectional interpretations. In this paper, I discuss the work of Brazilian philosopher Lélia Gonzalez and show how she anticipated intersectionality when elaborating the concept of *Amefricanidade* and the idea of Afrolatinamerican feminism in the 1980s. I argue that Gonzalez's intersectionality sparks prolific dialogue with recent works in the field. Finally, I outline a relational model for intersectionality inspired by Gonzalez's ideas.

Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994) was a black Brazilian philosopher, intellectual, and activist who acted on many fronts. According to Raquel Barreto, we can identify two moments in Gonzalez's work.¹ The first moment (1960s–1970s) is characterized by an economic debate influenced by Marxism and theories of dependent and marginal development. Gonzalez wanted to understand slavery and racism's economic impacts in a society where monopolist and competitive forms of capitalism coexisted and where both race and gender shaped the workforce.² In the second moment (1980s), Gonzalez changes her view of racism, relegating the economic debate to the second position and complementing it with psychoanalytic,³ historical, sociological, and anthropological debates about race.

The elements borrowed from the social sciences appear in Gonzalez's concept of *Amefricanidade*, which characterizes the African diaspora in the Americas.⁴ Aware of the differences in the meaning of blackness across societies, Gonzalez seeks to understand the common ground of the black experience in the "new world," marked by slavery and post-emancipation exploitation. She criticizes shallow forms of identification and favors a nuanced view acknowledging that blackness was significantly changed in the Americas. This reconstruction of people of African descent's identities in a new and hostile continent that they transformed into a home is what Gonzalez calls *Amefricanidade*. It "incorporates an entire historical process of intense

cultural dynamics (adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation and crafting of new forms) that is Afro-centered."^{5,6} Those elements brought from Africa during slavery helped build a new world, *América*. I shall return to *Amefricanidade* after we see Gonzalez's take on feminism.

AFROLATINAMERICAN FEMINISM

Gonzalez opens her celebrated 1988 paper "Por um feminismo afrolatinoamericano"⁷ ("For an afrolatinamerican feminism") stressing the relevance of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Golden Law,⁸ which "simply declared the end of slavery, revoking all other dispositions on that matter . . . and nothing else."⁹ For black people, the liberation struggle began long before emancipation, as an ongoing commitment towards an egalitarian society, one where racialization would not imply inferiority.

While acknowledging mainstream feminism contributions to understanding patriarchal capitalism, Gonzalez emphasizes its shortcomings regarding race. Those are not a lack of knowledge but oblivion or "racism by omission," caused by a "Eurocentric and neocolonialist cosmovision of reality."¹⁰ To explain the relationship between those elements, Gonzalez uses two Lacanian categories: the *infant* and the *subject-supposed-to-know*. The former designates the subject who cannot express themselves, thus being hostage to others' definitions. She links this to the situation of black women: "we, women and non-whites, have been spoken about, defined and classified by an ideological system that infantilizes us."¹¹

The *subject-supposed-to-know* refers to the unwarranted attribution of credibility to figures such as parents, teachers, professors, among others. Expanding the concept with ideas by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi, Gonzalez changes the focus from childhood to colonization. She argues that the colonized attribute epistemic superiority to the colonizer, thus reinforcing eurocentrism and neocolonialism. Gonzalez combines her versions of the Lacanian concepts to qualify her critique of traditional feminism in Latin America. By ignoring the multiracial and pluricultural aspect of Latin American societies, feminism becomes unable to provide a reasonable account of phenomena such as the sexual division of work, which has a prominent racial dimension.

Gonzalez explains racism in Latin America by going back to the Moor domain of the Iberian Peninsula. For her, the *Reconquista* had religious and racial motivations since the Moors were black. Another crucial element was the hierarchical structure that pervaded Iberian societies, where social positions were determined by strict rules. Latin American societies inherited and combined these features, creating segregation-free racialized forms of social stratification. This, combined with the ideology of whitening, reinforced "one of the most efficient myths of ideological domination: that of racial democracy."¹²

Racism is further complicated by sexism and class issues. As Gonzalez explains it,

It is important to insist on the fact that, in the context of deep existing racial inequalities in the continent,

sexual inequality appears very well articulated. This is a double discrimination against the non-white women of the region, African and Amerindian women. The double character of their biological condition—or racial and sexual—makes them the most oppressed and exploited women in a region dependent on patriarchal-racist capitalism. Precisely because this system transforms differences in inequalities, the discrimination they suffer assumes a triple character, given their class position.¹³

In the last section of the paper, Gonzalez presents her defense of Afrolatinamerican feminism. Focusing on black groups, she emphasizes that black women face difficulties among black male activists and white feminists. If this is so, why do black women usually organize themselves primarily in race-based rather than gender-based organizations? Gonzalez answers this way:

[F]or us, Ameamericans from Brazil and other countries of the region—and for Amerindians as well—the consciousness of oppression comes, before anything else, through race. Class exploitation and racial discrimination constitute the basic elements of the struggle common to men and women who belong to subaltern ethnic groups. The experience of black slavery, for example, was terribly lived by men and women, be they children, adults, or elderly. And it was inside the enslaved community that developed political-cultural forms of resistance that today allow us to carry on a centuries-long struggle for liberation.¹⁴

Since black women are discriminated against in both black activism and mainstream feminist movements, Gonzalez proposes the construction of a race-conscious feminism. In Latin America, this new feminism must incorporate and learn from the African and/or Indigenous origins of most women in the region. Therefore, feminism must become Afrolatinamerican feminism. This affords non-white women a way out of the sexist violence in black and ethnic movements and the invisibility/deracialization in women's movement. Gonzalez ends on a positive note, hopeful that the plurality of feminisms is only temporary, Afrolatinamerican feminism being a stage that will help feminism achieve its full potential.

INTERSECTIONS AND DIALOGUES

The role race, gender, and class play in Gonzalez's work is enough to characterize her as an intersectional thinker. I do not mean that anyone grappling with those elements is intersectional. What is crucial in Gonzalez is the way in which race, gender, and class interact. Departing from a class theory that acknowledged race and gender as collateral elements, Gonzalez came up with an understanding of her own, one in which race and gender constitute/are constituted by class. Therefore, race and gender deserve a place of honor in any structural analysis of capitalism, on pains of incompleteness and the inability to formulate accurate diagnostics.

Let us assume, for argument's sake, a two-tiered classification of approaches to intersectionality, focusing

either on identity elements or material conditions. I claim that an identity-only approach to Gonzalez's ideas would weaken her ideas. If devoid of material elements, Amefricanidade becomes a shallow notion reducible to memory and feelings. Despite their relevance, such elements are insufficient to make sense of the experience of black folks in the Americas. Once one considers materiality, blackness ceases to be an emotional affiliation and becomes something that can be tracked in history and mobilized in politics. A case in point is Gonzalez's characterization of the *mulata*. Gonzalez claims that the old figure of the *mucama*, a slave concubine, bifurcated into two: the domestic servant, an exploited worker, and the *mulata*,¹⁵ who is the focus of all attention during the Carnival. Nonetheless, they are frequently the same person. This shift in identity cannot be explained by identity elements alone. To make sense of the situation, one must consider the gendered and racialized forms of exploitation that relegates black women to low-paying positions, only giving them attention when extracting sexual benefits from their bodies.

An exclusively materialist account does not fare any better. The previously analyzed examples show the relevance of identity. For Amefricanidade to be meaningful, identity cannot be ignored. Otherwise, if identities were erased and only classes were left, the organization of people in workers' movements would have to be enough to address racial and gender problems.

Gonzalez's intersectionality blurs the materiality/identity divide, combining features from both. Afrolatinamerican identities make sense because they are rooted in material constraints and serve liberatory purposes. In Gonzalez's view, the adoption of an Afrolatinamerican feminism is one step in a journey that includes future insertion of Afrolatinamerican feminist values in the antiracist movement. She is not dealing with the question of whether one should racialize feminism or feminize antiracism. Both are necessary, and the order in which each must be enacted comes from the material conditions. It is the interaction of those elements that informs the struggle. In that regard, I think that Gonzalez would agree with Susan Ferguson's remarks about the inexistence of abstract capitalism.¹⁶

Gonzalez's thoughts can be put in dialogue with Patricia Hill Collins's view of intersectionality as a critical social theory in the making.¹⁷ Collins identifies three uses of intersectionality: metaphoric, heuristic, and paradigmatic shift. I shall focus on the third one with relation to Gonzalez's work. Both the ideas of Amefricanidade and Afrolatinamerican feminism aim at a shift of the prevalent paradigm. Amefricanidade creates bonds among people who used to see themselves as separate groups. Such bonding is politically relevant, since it helps fight the mechanisms that keep working the machinery of economic, gender, and racial exploitation.

Collins's characterization is also comprised of core constructs and guiding premises,¹⁸ the latter being formulated as follows:

- 1) Race, class, and gender as systems of power are interdependent;

- 2) Intersecting power relations produce complex social inequalities;
- 3) Intersecting power relations shape individual and group experiences;
- 4) Solving social problems requires intersectional analysis.

It is not difficult to see those premises operating in Gonzalez's work. For example, Afrolatinamerican feminism exemplifies premise 1, while premise 3 is manifest in the mulata example.

Sara Bernstein's metaphysical approach is also relevant to the present discussion. The author opens her "The Metaphysics of Intersectionality"¹⁹ with a general understanding of intersectionality as inseparability of identity constituents. She then looks at forms of inseparability and argues that the suitable version for intersectional thinking does not exclude conceptual separability. There are two families of notions of separability: destruction conceptions (eggs are destroyed when baking a cake) and intact conceptions (bricks remain integral inside a wall). The former, Bernstein argues, does not work for intersectionality as it does not preserve identity constituents—after all, a black woman ceases to be neither black nor woman. Bernstein proposes two ways of understanding inseparability as an intact category conception: explanatory unity and interaction among identity categories. The latter does not square well with cross-constitution approaches and downplays the role of inseparability. Therefore, this notion should be discarded. The author concludes that the best understanding of inseparability is as explanatory unity: "intersectional categories are explanatorily prior to their constituents. Rather than the conjuncts explaining the conjunction, the conjunction explains the conjuncts."²⁰

The creation of new categories such as Amefricanidade reflects the necessity of emphasizing the intersectional category's relevance. Amefricanidade is the result of a complex process involving slavery, settlement, and racialization, among other elements. Gonzalez introduces Amefricanidade because characterizing such people as hyphenated Americans or Africans would be lacking. This is not to deny their African or American ancestry, but to signal that those elements underwent such a radical change that a new category is needed. This is precisely the central idea in Bernstein, that intersectionality is explanatory priority of the intersectional category over the components.

Another virtue of Bernstein's approach present in Gonzalez's ideas is the avoidance of disputes over priority among oppression. When Gonzalez advocates Afrolatinamerican feminism, she does not prioritize any of the involved dimensions. Historical circumstances may force people to identify primarily with one dimension of their being rather than others. However, that does not imply prioritization. The initial point is relevant, but even more relevant is the intersectional approach, taking subjects beyond their immediate circumstances and crafting solidarity. Gonzalez would also appreciate the end of disputes over priority because, as an activist, she was aware of the endless

debates about priority that frequently pull political activists apart.

THINKING WITH GONZALEZ

Inspired by Gonzalez's view, in this section, I sketch an account of intersectionality. As I see it, Gonzalez's approach has two crucial virtues. First, it avoids the reification of social categories or systems of oppression. Second, it smoothly accommodates social change. Think of the example of the mulata. It would be difficult to sustain that there is something inside the women who are both mulatas and domestic workers to explain their transformation from one to the other. This difficulty disappears if we think about the organization of the social world in terms of relations. I pursue that intuition in the paragraphs below.

To motivate the discussion, consider the following questions: 1) What are the things that intersect? 2) How do they intersect? 3) What is the result of the intersection? To answer the first question, we must be careful not to be fooled by imprecise language. We commonly hear that gender and race intersect, or that sexism and racism intersect. What exactly does that mean? The claim that gender and race intersect aims to capture the idea that the entities gender and race operate at the same time in the same context. This view is difficult to accept because there are only a few genders and races, but the intersection results appear to be far more varied than any combinatorics can cover. The problem with that view is that the intersecting categories are reified, robbing them of the flexibility they need to participate in dynamic processes.

The "sexism and racism intersect" formulation avoids the lack of flexibility since it deals with systems of oppression, which are adaptable to different situations. It is important to notice that, in each particular instance of intersectional oppression, there is no need for the entire systems to intersect, but only the elements involved in the situation at hand. We can particularize the discussion by introducing relations, the ways in which systems of oppression are made manifest. Therefore, sexism is made of sexist relations; racism is comprised of racist relations, and so on. Relations are the bridge between the general system of oppression and concrete instances of oppression. By their particularistic nature, relations carry out all the relevant contextual elements. Relations, in my approach, are the basic elements that intersect.

We can now advance to question 2), namely, how the intersection happens. It happens through two processes: iteration and mutual constitution of relations. Iteration is the repetition of a process. So, an iterative relation is repeated many times. Relations R and S are said to be mutually constituted when R is used as an input for S and S serves as an input for R. As an example, to claim that racist and sexist relations are mutually constituted is to claim that racism informs sexism and sexism informs racism.

Finally, consider the third question about the metaphysical status of whatever results from the intersection. In the relational approach, the answer is simple: when two or more relations undergo the intersection, that is, when mutually constituted relations undergo a process of iteration, the

outcome is an updated version of the relations at hand. No new kind is created, nothing is destroyed, only refreshed versions of the entering relations are produced. The relational approach offers a simple and elegant solution that carries the explanatory burden without positing an unnecessary proliferation of metaphysical entities.

Before I return to Gonzalez, let me briefly defend my mutual-constitution approach from a criticism directed at such approaches by Marta Jorba and Maria Rodó-Zárate.²¹ The authors argue that such accounts are problematic because “‘constitution’ in the general sense of ‘being made of’ is quite difficult to apply to many interactions among social categories and may in fact not be what intersectionality theorists are after.”²² Although I agree with their diagnostic about the different ways in which “constitution” is used, I diverge when it comes to characterizing it as inherently reifying. The relational account I sketched does not reify social categories, and therefore the criticism does not apply to it.

I think that the relational account just sketched combines with Gonzalez’s intersectional thinking. Depending on the context of interaction, a poor young black woman can be a mulata or a domestic worker. She is still the same person. What changes are the relations she establishes with others. Amefricanidade is such a complex intersectional relation that the basic original categories (relations) become less explanatory than the intersectional construct itself. As for feminisms, be that mainstream or Afrolatinamerican, the starting point is not too relevant because, as iterations happen, new points of view are incorporated, resulting in more comprehensive and explanatory categories.

The outline sketched above needs substantial development, which include engagement with fundamental authors such as Maria Lugones and Linda Martín Alcoff, to name just a few. Despite all that, I think the approach outlined here points in an exciting direction as it throws light on how we can critically carry on Lélia Gonzalez’s legacy.

NOTES

1. Raquel Barreto, “Introdução: Lélia Gonzalez, uma intérprete do Brasil,” in *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras: Lélia Gonzalez em Primeira Pessoa*, ed. UCPA – União dos Coletivos Pan-Africanistas (Rio de Janeiro: Diáspora Africana, 2018), 12–27.
2. Bárbara Machado, “Articulando utopias: algumas possibilidades do encontro entre feminismo negro e o marxismo da reprodução social,” *Lutas Sociais* 22.40 (2018): 23–35.
3. The psychoanalytic approach is “an attempt to explicate the entire dynamics of the manifold race relations in Brazil, which embrace many fields such as culture, economy, and the dynamics of social relations themselves with psychoanalysis.” Raquel Barreto, “Enegrecendo o Feminismo ou Feminizando a Raça: Narrativas de Libertação em Angela Davis e Lélia Gonzalez,” MA thesis, (PUC Rio de Janeiro, 2005), 47.
4. America is a continent, not a country. Gonzalez uses America to refer to the continent. When she wants to refer to the United States, she writes “the United States.” I follow Gonzalez’s use of America and derived terms.
5. All the translations of Gonzalez’s texts quoted in the essay are mine.
6. Lélia Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras: Lélia Gonzalez em Primeira Pessoa*, ed. UCPA – União dos Coletivos Pan-Africanistas (Rio de Janeiro: Diáspora Africana, 2018), 329.

7. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 307–20.
8. Signed in 1888, *Lei Áurea* (the Golden Law) put an end to slavery in Brazil.
9. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 307.
10. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 309.
11. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 310.
12. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 313.
13. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 314.
14. Gonzalez, *Primavera Para As Rosas Negras*, 316.
15. Gonzalez also studied the figure of the *mãe preta* (Mammy). To some extent, this study anticipates Patricia Hill Collins’s concept of controlling images.
16. Susan Ferguson claims that “[c]apitalism’ as a simple abstraction does not actually exist. There is only concretely racialized, patriarchal, colonial capitalism, wherein class is conceived as a unity of the diverse relations that produce not simply profit or capital, but capitalism.” Susan Ferguson, “Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms,” *Historical Materialism* 24, no. 2 (2016): 38–60, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206X-12341471>.
17. Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019)
18. The core constructs are elements that commonly appear in the works of intersectionality practitioners. Collins enumerates five of such constructs: relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity, and social justice. The guiding premises are assumptions that inform the theorizing and practice of those in the field.
19. Sara Bernstein, “The Metaphysics of Intersectionality,” *Philosophical Studies* 177, no. 2 (2020): 321–35, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-019-01394-x>.
20. Bernstein, “The Metaphysics of Intersectionality,” 330.
21. Marta Jorba and Maria Rodó-Zárate, “Beyond Mutual Constitution: The Properties Framework for Intersectional Studies,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45, no. 1 (2019): 175–200, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/703499>.
22. Jorba and Rodó-Zárate, “Beyond Mutual Constitution,” 183.

Hispanics, Latinxs, Philosophers

Manuel Vargas

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

How should we think about the nature of the social identity group commonly called *Latinos* or *Hispanics*, the nature of *Latina/o/x philosophy*, and perhaps relatedly, of *Latina/o/xs in philosophy*? If one wishes to address these questions, an especially instructive place to begin is with Jorge Gracia’s writings. In his *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective*¹ and *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity*,² he offers a detailed account of these things. In later works, he extends and applies aspects of those accounts, but the core elements of his picture receive their fullest presentation in those two monographs.

The ambition of this article is to reconsider—and to rehabilitate, in part—some of the main claims from those works, especially given important concerns that have been raised about Gracia’s approach. I focus on three questions: (1) What is the best way to understand Gracia’s characterization of Hispanics?; (2) Should we accept his further characterization of Latinos, a group he regards as distinct from Hispanics, but overlapping?; and (3) Should

we accept Gracia's account of the situation of Latino philosophers within the US academy? The approximate answers are, in order, that Gracia's account of the unity of Hispanics is more capacious than is commonly acknowledged, and indeed, more capacious than Gracia himself acknowledged in print; however, on Gracia-like grounds we should resist his account of Latinos; and lastly, Gracia's own work on the status of Hispanics in philosophy suggests that we should resist some of his account of the circumstances of Latino philosophers. It is perhaps fair to say that the present account is critical in the details, but optimistic about many of the ideas in Gracia's work.

1. THINGS, CONCEPTS, AND TERMS

Anyone writing about the social ontology of Hispanics or Latinxs faces immediate difficulties. First, there is a messy but earnest politics concerning terminology, whether to use "Hispanics," "Latinos," or some other term. Second, the target of a given account is oftentimes variable: sometimes the stakes are labels, sometimes concepts, and sometimes questions about whether a given person is properly a member of the social identity group in question. Let's take these issues in reverse order.

Loosely following Cappelen and Plunkett,³ the present account will make use of a distinction between object-level phenomena (the things, bearers of properties, or bundles of those properties that we mean to refer to in direct discourse about the world), representation-level phenomena (concepts or representational devices), and our terms (the words of labels we use to talk about things). In the context of talk about social identity groups, this is a distinction between: (i) object-level questions, that is, for example, questions of whether some specific thing is a *member* or instance of the social identity group, whatever that comes to; (ii) representation-level questions, i.e., questions about our *concept*, or the representational device we have for the group; and (iii) *labelling* questions about what to call the objects and their concepts (going forward, I won't keep saying "or the representational device"—feel free to add it if you dislike talk of concepts).

These distinctions can sometimes seem subtle, but they are important. Take, for example, the term "woman." We might disagree about whether a given person is a woman. This is an object-level disagreement. We might also disagree about the concept. Some insist that the best characterization of existing thought and talk about *WOMAN*—the capitalization here indicating a concept, or a representation-level phenomenon—involves a category grounded in genes. Others insist that this is a mistake, and that the concept picks out, for example, a variably expressed social identity. There is also the question of terminology: one might hold that we do better to avoid some terms—"dame," "lady"—and that we should use some labels ("woman") in specific contexts and ways, saving related terms ("female") for yet other purposes.

If we are clear about these distinctions, it helps to make salient an important possibility: where there are potentially a variety of candidate specifications of the concept and potentially several terms to pick out the phenomena of interest, one might engage in some linguistic or

conceptual *negotiation*, advocating on behalf of a particular regimentation of thought and talk.⁴ That is, whatever our current ordinary concept may be, the theorist might seek to revise it or replace it, perhaps in the service of some instrumental, perhaps ameliorative, end. A given account of "woman" might be understood as a reforming proposal, as in Haslanger,⁵ marking a social status distinguished by subordination in view of one's perceived role in biological reproduction. Similarly, one might understand disputes about the extension of "marriage" and racial "Whiteness" to involve large-scale, collective efforts at conceptual and linguistic negotiation. In the context of theoretical proposals at the representation-level, philosophers have argued for explicitly revisionist accounts of race, propositional attitudes, free will, and moral desert.⁶

In the US, in the context of discussions about the social identity group that has been variously referred to with the terms "Hispanic," "Latino," "Latin@," "Latina/o," "Latinx," and "Latine," among others, there is robust disagreement at the level of labels. Activists, scholars, and members of the social identity group disagree about what term is preferable, and on what basis. Disputants variously cite facts about differential uptake, what a given term signifies, the history associated with it, what is foregrounded (e.g., the Iberian Peninsula, US social identity categories) or excluded (e.g., self-designation, Indigenous social identities), and concerns about pronounceability.⁷ Ongoing linguistic innovation seems to be the order of the day. For all that, disagreement about terms is the visible tip of an iceberg that includes disagreements at both the object- and representation-levels. That is, there are disagreements about whether given individuals and groups are in the extension, and ongoing disagreements about how to understand the intension or the concept.

Gracia has made contributions to discussions about all these levels, and as I will argue, he might also be understood to be engaged in some degree of conceptual negotiation on behalf of his proposals. Even so, his central contributions are perhaps best construed as about the category, or at the representation-level. In the interest of clarity, I will default to using his terminology when talking about his views. I will otherwise use "Latinxs" as a putatively neutral term, and *LATINXS* for the concept, although I recognize that this choice has its own infelicities.

2. ETHNIC GROUP TERMS: THE CASE OF "HISPANICS"

The centerpiece of Gracia's work on ethnicity is his "Familial Historical" conception of ethnic groups. The core proposal is that ethnic groups are to be conceived of as "extended historical families whose members have no identifiable properties, or set of properties, that are shared by all the members throughout the existence of the familial groups, but that the historical connections that tie them give rise to properties which are common to some members of the group and, in context, serve to distinguish them from other groups."⁸ In the case of Hispanics, the relevant historical connections that distinguish them arise from the nexus of historical ties that arises out the events of 1492.⁹ This is, then, a representation-level account, focused on the

concept that figures in thought and talk about the group he refers to with the term “Hispanics.”

On the face of it, a striking feature about Gracia’s account is his recurring insistence that there is no common feature or property among members of an ethnic group. As he put it in his earlier work, “There is no need to find properties common to all Hispanics in order to classify them as Hispanics. What ties us is the same kind of thing that ties the members of a family, as Wittgenstein would say.”¹⁰ It is an attempt to characterize a category or concept in a way that avoids appeal to any essential properties. What makes this puzzling, though, is how this could be. In virtue of what would the category be a category? How would a motley of disconnected properties constitute a stable category, rather than a monstrous and unprincipled disjunction?

My suspicion is that the metaphor of family resemblance is being asked to do too much work, accounting for both *classification* (i.e., determining membership, or establishing what something is) and *resemblance* (i.e., sharing of first-order properties). Gracia is likely correct about Hispanics and resemblance—they don’t universally share first-order properties. It is unclear why this point about resemblance bears on classification, or the right representation-level accounts of Hispanics.

Consider the Wittgensteinian element invoked in both *Hispanic/Latino Identity* and *Latinos in America*, and Gracia’s repeated claims that ethnic groups are families, or like them.¹¹ On one understanding of Wittgenstein’s point, his idea of family resemblance is intended to show how some properties—for example, the property of resembling others in a family—depends upon a cluster of other properties where there is no single subordinate property that is shared by all members who resemble each other. That is, the property of family resemblance turns out to be the property of sharing any of a diverse set of properties distinctive of a given family. It is a higher-order property because it specifies other properties; it is not essentialist at the first-order, because there is no single property that is had among all in the family who resemble each other.

What Wittgenstein’s example does *not* show is that membership in a family, or that being appropriately classified in or out of a family, does not depend on a single property. Whether family members resemble one another is a different matter than the question of what makes them all members of the same family. Careful attention to the nature of families suggests that Wittgenstein’s point about family *resemblance* does not hold in the case of *membership* in a family. Under ordinary circumstances, we can identify a property that unifies families, and that is held by all members of that family. To do this, though, we need to be precise about the notion of family that is at stake.

For example, if we are interested in a *biological* notion of family (for example, to make assessments about the likelihood of hereditary diseases), then relations of biological descent from a breeding pair—as biologists inelegantly put it—will allow us to say who is in and out of a family. We can make relatively straightforward assessments about this matter, even allowing for degrees of genetic

relation. However, the core notion of family in this sense will be one that tracks biologically significant properties, such as being genetic descendants of a breeding pair.

If, we are interested in a *legal* notion of family—for example, to decide tax benefits and legal duties of care—we appeal to the governing laws that define what counts as a family. In this case, the property shared by all members is a legal one. Such a notion is not prior to human practices. However, social practices matter for creatures like us. The significance and importance of legal conceptions of the family has been no small part of the motivations for recognizing the legal status of gay and lesbian marriages, for example.

To be sure, there are interesting limit cases. It is conceivable that one can operate with something like an *emotional* notion of family. For example, one might think of a non-genetically related, non-legally related person as a “sister” or “cousin” in some sense of family that is neither legally nor genetically fixed. Some uses in this spirit may be honorific or metaphorical, but others may reflect an articulable notion of family that we do not yet widely recognize.

We need not take a normative stand on the proper range of folk notions of family and what properly constitutes family. No matter what range of uses we recognize as legitimate, there are bound to be marginal or liminal uses of the term. This fact is mostly orthogonal to the present issue. The point here is that on any useful notion of family, there is some property or cluster of properties that is relevant for settling questions of membership. If we wish to settle questions of membership, we need to know the relevant properties that determine categorization. Regardless of whether those properties are features of the world or our interests, neither evades this basic constraint on classification.

The properties that settle membership in an ethnic category may come in degrees, or otherwise allow some notion of centrality and peripherality as an instance of the kind. Just as remote family members can be marginal or liminal cases of family, so too can individuals be with respect to ethnic group membership. Even so, in the real world we might lack ready characterizations of the properties that fix membership in a group. However, once we have made our interest precise, none of these facts suffice to justify the conclusion that families are not picked out by some essential property or set of properties. Wittgenstein’s point about family *resemblance*, then, does not deny that we can give an account of family *membership*, which is the classificatory issue at stake.¹²

There is, though, a reasonable way forward. Even better, it builds on ideas already in Gracia’s work. So long as Gracia is prepared to acknowledge that *higher-order* properties, such as shared historical properties, can be properties, then there is a unifying membership or classificatory property for Hispanic/Latinos, i.e., the property of sharing some (to-be-identified) overlapping historical tie. Alternately, were Gracia inclined to insist that higher-order properties, cannot be properties, it would be good to know why not.¹³

Consider, for example this passage: “Hispanics are the group of people comprised by the inhabitants of the countries of the Iberian Peninsula after 1492 and what were to become the colonies of those countries after the encounter between Iberia and America took place, and by descendants of these people who live in other countries (e.g., the United States) but preserve some link to those people.”¹⁴ One way of glossing this passage is the following: *Hispanics are the group of people with socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula.* This sort of gloss is suggested by numerous remarks Gracia makes, including the following: “beginning in the year of the encounter, the Iberian countries and their colonies in America developed a web of historical connections which continues to this day and which separates these people from others”¹⁵ and “What ties them together, and separates them from others, is history and the particular events of that history . . . a unique web of changing historical relations supplies their unity.”¹⁶

I propose that we read these passages as identifying a minimal condition for someone being Hispanic, that is, that they have some socially meaningful historical tie to the events of 1492. It is minimal, in that one can supplement it in a variety of ways. It is higher order, in that it is a property about other properties, namely, the ones that are socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula. This account does not identify some specific common, substantive property that is shared by all Hispanics everywhere and when. Rather, it identifies a general and higher-order type of property (again, roughly, social meaningfulness in connection with 1492) that is shared, in different ways, and to different degrees, by anyone who is Hispanic.¹⁷

To be sure, we might want to say more about what socially meaningful historical ties are, whether there are any ties that cannot count no matter what, whether there is any interesting content that needs to be grasped for users of the concept to distinguish between cases where it applies and doesn’t, and so forth. Even so, we do not need to settle all these questions to appreciate that there is a *prima facie* theoretical option available to Gracia, one that allows him to deflect concerns about unprincipled disjunctions while delivering a story that makes sense of there being some basis for insisting that there is a group here at all.

If all of this is right, then we can and should acknowledge Gracia’s contention that the first-order properties had by members of an ethnic group might be analogous to resemblance within a biological family, with no one first-order property being possessed by all. It would not follow that there is *no* property that holds across all members of Hispanics. The claim here is that Gracia himself identifies a plausible enough candidate, i.e., socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492. We can therefore address a puzzle about the view as he has stated it, by cautiously amending it in a way consistent with the overall picture.

An important virtue of this recasting of Gracia’s account is that it is compatible with virtually all the main features of

his account. First, it is a property that can come in degrees, allowing greater and lesser amounts or degrees of ties to capture the notion of greater and lesser degrees of membership (or centrality) to the ethnic group. Second, it can be complemented with a contextualist story that explains more demanding notions of being Hispanic. For example, we can take the historical ties idea, and couple it to the idea that there are shifting and culturally contingent judgments about which sorts of historical ties are socially meaningful for identity in the group in each time and place. That is, the metaphysician’s minimalist higher-order notion of a socially meaningful historical tie to 1492 might be fleshed out with variable local estimates about which sorts of historical ties matter for membership in the group. In some times and places, fluency in specific languages might matter more and less, in others, specific cultural practices might have different social significance for meaningfulness, and so on. Context and intersubjective concerns will constrain which kinds of ties settle local estimates of membership in the group. Still, a minimal unifying notion exists, and the requirement of *some* socially meaningful tie to 1492 and thereafter is no less real a property because it has culturally and historically variable elaboration. Given that that social ontology is social, this seems exactly right.¹⁸

This is a *minimalist and higher-order tie* (HOT) account of Hispanics. It is a reconstruction of what Gracia could (and perhaps should) have held with respect to the concept *HISPANIC*. It captures his important insight that first-order properties (language, food, cultural practices more generally) can vary and that none are universally had by Hispanics. However, it also addresses what otherwise looks puzzling about his account—i.e., explaining how Hispanics meaningfully constitute a group, if there is no shared first-order property. The shared property explains why many (temporally, geographically) clustered bundles of properties that are taken to constitute being Hispanic aren’t an entirely unprincipled sets of disjunctions: they are ways communities have settled on socially meaningful ties to the events of 1492.

Before turning to his account of Latino, it may be useful to address a handful of concerns that can be directed at the present reconstruction. First, one might worry that this is an unsatisfying account of an ethnic group, because it is not obvious that the HOT approach readily extends to other conventionally recognized ethnic groups. Not all groups plausibly have an equivalent of 1492 to provide a nexus for socially meaningful ties. That is, whatever the nature of other ethnic groups, they do not seem to have the particular HOT-ness characteristic of Hispanics.

While it is possible that some conventionally recognized ethnic groups are not genuinely ethnic groups, this seems an undesirable result. It is a better and more plausible regimentation of our categories to hold that commonly recognized ethnic groups may be characterizable in terms of socially meaningful ties in virtue of standard cultural categories (language, social practices, and so on). Indeed, this is standardly how ethnic groups are understood, that is, as groups centrally constituted by densely overlapping cultural norms and practices. We thus have two options here. First, we might grant that Hispanics are a distinctive

group in the way Gracia has claimed, irrespective of whether they are best thought of as an ethnic group. (I find this view tempting, but it is obviously a departure from Gracia's explicit ambitions.) Alternately, we might try to rescue his approach to ethnic group categories by holding that a higher-order tie story is available for other groups, even if it is unlikely to be given by socially meaningful connections to a specific historical event. This would require further work, of course, but it would allow Gracia to insist that socially meaningful historical ties are not a requirement for it being a HOT group, even if it is distinctive of Hispanics.

A second concern is that Gracia's picture seems to entail that, for example, prior to 1492, Queen Isabella and other historical figures in Spain like El Cid were not Hispanic. Gracia accepts this consequence, and it strikes me as a not unreasonable position.¹⁹ Still, nothing that his position precludes him from saying more or different things about this case. For example, he could supplement what he does say by insisting that there are different senses of "Hispanic," and that his notion comes apart from some folk usage. Indeed, Gracia notes that US usage of "Hispanic" is variable about what it denotes.²⁰

Below, I say more about how we might think about Gracia's methodology, but he is not much concerned to strictly respect whatever ordinary language gives us on this matter. His interest is in the best way to do the ontology of a particular ethnic group, regardless of what label we use for it. Sometimes, that will involve linguistic or conceptual revision of folk notions. So, it seems open to him to say that there is some group—call it whatever you like—that includes socially meaningful connections between the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, and their descendants. Thus, it might well turn out that we say that there are two notions here, Hispanic in a sense that includes pre-1492 Iberians (and others), and Hispanic in Gracia's sense. El Cid was Hispanic in the former sense but not in the latter.

A different possibility available to Gracia is to say that a way to have socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 just is to be a member of a nation or a people that *subsequently* came to conquer or be conquered by the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula after 1492. On this approach, pre-1492 peoples—El Cid, Nezahualcōyotl, and other pre-1492 members of peoples, nations, or communities—could be Hispanic with the right historical connections, irrespective of whether those labeled as such would have thought of themselves in that way. There is some appeal to this sort of account, given his picture, but it is not what he says about Iberians and Indigenous peoples prior to 1492.²¹

The general upshot to the foregoing is that there is ample reason to think Gracia's account is more capacious than many of his critics have realized. It contains resources for addressing a variety of familiar worries, and although it perhaps inevitably raises questions of its own, the present reconstruction of his account provides a principled story about how Hispanics might constitute an identity group despite diverse chains of descent, languages, norms, and cultural practices.

3. TWO CONCEPTS OF LATINO

In the previous section, I proposed a friendly amendment to Gracia's account, one that allows him to say that there is an important property that is had by all Hispanics, i.e., the property of having socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula. Those ties are not necessarily genetic, although they are in some cases; nor are the ties always the same ones, because the social meaningfulness of a given historical tie varies across time and place. However, someone is Hispanic *to the degree* to which he or she stands in socially meaningful historical relationships to 1492, where those first-order ties may vary by time and place.

In this section I consider Gracia's later account of Latinos. As Gracia uses these terms, *Hispanics* are a larger group, one that includes members of the Iberian Peninsula, Latin Americans, and people descended of either. *Latinos* are the specifically Latin American-derived subset of Hispanics.²² Although he is less frequently explicit about it, he appears to hold the same core account of the origin of the historical ties amongst Latinos. For example, he notes that Latinos did not exist prior to 1492²³ and that in both English and Spanish, "Latino" is used to refer to "people or things that are part of the region known as Latin America or originate there in one way rather than elsewhere."²⁴ Thus, on Gracia's conception, the term "Latino" applies to both Latin Americans and their descendants with the relevant socially meaningful historical ties to 1492. The Iberian element that is part of Gracia's HISPANIC is absent in LATINO, but Latinos include people of Latin American descent both within and without the United States.

Gracia's expansive conception of Latinos has struck some as non-standard. For example, Renzo Llorente has objected that

it makes the most sense to use Latino for Latin Americans who have emigrated to a non-Latin American country, along with the descendants of these emigrants who are born and/or brought up in these non-Latin American countries of destination. Indeed, I believe that contemporary usage tends to reflect a conception of "Latino" along these lines: Peruvians in Colombia may view themselves as Peruvians or Latin Americans, or perhaps even some hybrid of Peruvian and Colombian, but I doubt that they tend to think of themselves as "Latinos." Yet these very same Peruvians might be apt to see themselves primarily as Latino were they to emigrate to the United States or some other non-Latin American country.²⁵

I share Llorente's linguistic intuitions that in standard US English usage, the term "Latino" picks out populations of Latin Americans and of Latin American descent in the United States, and that it excludes Latin Americans living in Latin America. That this usage is indeed standard is confirmed by authorities both pedestrian and august, including Wikipedia²⁶ and *The Oxford English Dictionary*.²⁷

If Llorente and I are right about the standard meaning of the term, Gracia is either mistaken, or instead, he is engaged in linguistic and conceptual negotiation. That is, he might be offering, or be construed as offering, a reforming characterization of the concept. On this reading, he would be tacitly arguing that we should speak in a way that reflects his account of the concept. Why might he want to do this? If Gracia's reforming account does a better job than current folk usage(s) in carving up practical or theoretically useful kinds, that might be a reason to advocate for it. If he were right, we would have reason to re-anchor our thought and talk in a way that comports with Gracia's usage, even if it conflicts with aspects of current folk thought and talk.

Entertaining this possibility requires a bit of regimentation. We need a way to distinguish the Gracia reforming proposal from the ordinary folk notion. We can use superscripts to regiment our discussion in the following way:

Let *Latino*^G, *LATINO*^G, and cognate terms employ Gracia's conception of *LATINX*.

Let *Latino*^F, *LATINO*^F, and cognate terms employ the folk conception of *LATINX*.

Given this convention, we can say that one can be *Latino*^G with no interesting relationship to the United States and its social practices. However, one cannot be *Latino*^F without being in the United States or standing in some non-trivial relationship to US social practices.

So, are there any reasons to favor the displacement of *LATINO*^F by *LATINO*^G? If so, what might they be? And, even if there are reasons to favor displacement, are there countervailing reasons to resist it, beyond the familiar fact that it is no easy thing to overturn existing ways of thinking and talking? That is what we now turn to consider.

4. HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY, LATINX PHILOSOPHY

Gracia offers a distinctive account of *LATINX*, one that is plausibly at odds with ordinary thought and talk. I've argued that this does not, by itself, mean the account fails, as the account can be recast as a proposal for revising or replacing ordinary usage. Could this succeed? It seems hopeless to try to adjudicate this question in a general, unrestricted way. More promising, perhaps, is to ask whether there are contexts that might favor one notion over the other, and whether there are specific interests that might favor a revisionary proposal along the lines we are here considering.

Recall that one of Gracia's enduring interests has been in the characterization of ethnic philosophies—especially Hispanic and Latinx philosophies. Part of the distinctive disciplinary appeal of having a category of *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY*, whatever label we use in conjunction with it, is that it picks out a practical useful thing, namely, a body of philosophical work that has a robust shared history.²⁸ One cannot adequately understand Francisco de Vitoria without taking account of how contact with the Americas affected his thought; the work of Las Casas and Sor Juana cannot be understood in isolation from scholastic thought in Spain; Spanish-born figures like José Gaos and José Ortega y

Gasset are central figures in how philosophy unfolded in parts of Latin America, and so on. These are not just incidental ties, according to Gracia, but the warp and weft of the history of Spanish-language philosophical work. It is that fact that justifies the urgency and necessity of thinking about *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY*, even if there is ample reason to contest labels that give some pride of place to the Iberian Peninsula.

Perhaps there is a parallel account to be made for *LATINO*^G, that is, Gracia's conception of *LATINX*? Gracia seems to think that there is, arguing that *Latino*^G philosophy is ethnic philosophy, in the sense that it is the philosophy produced by members of that *ethnos*, subject to all the contextual negotiations about its extension that one finds in any ethnic philosophy.²⁹ Further, he allows that we can divide up philosophical works along ethnic, sub-ethnic, regional, and national bases. So, thinking of someone as a *Latino*^G philosopher need not preclude us from thinking of the same philosopher as Uruguayan or South American. Still, he insists that his Familial-Historical View is the right account of *LATINX PHILOSOPHY*, and that "*Latino*^G" is the right label for that conception.

Notice, though, that the concept *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY* earns its keep by usefully carving up the world in explanatorily helpful ways. It is less clear that *LATINO*^G *PHILOSOPHY* does the same, and thus, it is less clear that we have reason to supplant the folk notion of *Latino* for Gracia's revisionist proposal. Worse, we have reason to make a distinction that cross-cuts Gracia's notion in a way that is readily captured by the folk notion. That is, we have some reason to want to readily distinguish between *Latino*^G Philosophers in Latin America (conventionally: "Latin American philosophers") and *Latino*^G Philosophers in the United States (conventionally: "Latinx philosophers"): these groups are subject to importantly different experiences.

María Christina González and Nora Stigol have argued that Gracia's usage of "*Latino*," especially in the context of philosophy, obscures important differences between the situation of Latin Americans and *Latinos*^F, and correspondingly, between the situation of Latin American and *Latino*^F philosophers.³⁰ Among the differences they highlight is a comparatively higher degree of internal dialogue among *Latino*^F philosophers than Latin American philosophers, as well as distinct histories shaping these populations. Crucial to their case is the idea that *Latinos*^F and Latin Americans are distinct in their socially meaningful statuses *because they occupy different social positions with respect to the United States*. For example, to be *Latino*^F is to occupy a social status internal to the US, one subject to distinctive norms and forms of treatment.³¹ In contrast, Latin Americans living in Latin America do not occupy and cannot occupy the social status of *Latinos*^F inasmuch as they are in Latin America. Put simply, they are not subject to the distinctive norms and social meanings of daily life in the United States—unless they come to the United States.

Gracia is quick to note that some *Latino*^G philosophers in the United States share a similar history to Latin American philosophers, namely, those born and/or raised in Latin America. This is true enough, but it is mostly beside the

point. I take it that González and Stigol are noting that when one is Latino^f in the United States, quite apart from whether one is born inside or outside of the United States, one is subject to distinctive social statuses, norms, and forms of treatment that do not apply to one who has only been Latino^o outside the United States. For that matter, as Llorente's remarks suggest,³² this is also true as a matter of uptake or self-identification: ordinarily, one does not think of oneself as Latino until one has been in the United States.³³

I find these considerations decisive, but Gracia, or someone like him, might resist this diagnosis, insisting that Latinx philosophers are not particularly subject to distinctive statuses, norms, and forms of treatment. For example, Gracia has maintained that "what is discriminated against is not Latino philosophers but, rather, what I call Latino philosophy, and only indirectly Latino philosophers when they do Latino philosophy."³⁴ He has also asserted that the then-recent ascension of Latino/a presidents of divisions of the American Philosophical Association (Ernest Sosa, Linda Alcoff) demonstrated that Latinx philosophers can escape discrimination.³⁵

It is surely possible that some Latinx philosophers might evade being subject to distinctive norms and statuses that turn on their being perceived as Latinx, and that they might find success even in the face of discrimination. At the same time, there are accounts that predict that, for example, Latino philosophers who can more easily pass as white, whose English comports with stereotypical academic English, and whose names are not suggestive of out-groups, will be more likely to find visible success than Latinos who cannot.³⁶ Gracia recognizes all of this. Still, it is striking that he thinks that Latinx philosophers suffer from discrimination only in virtue of doing Latino^o philosophy.

I confess that I find Gracia's position on this matter surprising, in part because it is a marked departure from his prior views. His *Hispanic/Latino Identity* is as an eloquent articulation of the way Hispanic/Latinx philosophers, *qua* Hispanic/Latinxs, suffer from discrimination in philosophy.³⁷ Perhaps Gracia changed his mind about whether Hispanic/Latino philosophers suffer from discrimination. Or perhaps he thought Hispanics are subject to bias, but not Latinos^o? It would be puzzling, though, why a general anti-Hispanic bias would not produce an anti-Latinx bias. He never explains what changed.

Discrimination is undoubtedly a complicated matter. Still, contra Gracia's later assertions in "Latinos in America: A Response," the earlier Gracia suggests in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* that Latino^o philosophers *do* face distinctive forms of discrimination in the United States. So, there is an empirical issue here. It is not obvious to me that the most plausible position on this issue holds that US Latinxs and Latin Americans are on a par with respect to their US status, whether understood socially or phenomenologically.

If we accept that socially meaningful historical ties are an important part of the conditions on being a member of an ethnic group, this difference in the experience of social statuses and norms can matter for marking social identity groups. Given that we already have a term with a standard

usage that reflects this distinction—"Latino^f"—we would need an especially good reason to overturn it for a usage that reduces our ability to talk about and identify an already socially meaningful category. Other things equal, we should opt for more rather than less expressive power. Gracia's reforming proposal for LATINX leaves us with less precision and expressive power. Absent further considerations, it is unpromising as a proposal for semantic and conceptual reform.

5. THE SITUATION OF LATINX PHILOSOPHERS

Even if we reject Gracia's account of Latinxs, and his later picture of the social position of Latinx philosophy, this does not mean there is nothing to be gotten from his account of Latinxs.

Consider the following remarks from *Hispanic/Latino Identity*:

The perception of foreignness is a major obstacle to Hispanics in the philosophical community. The American philosophical community is cliquish, xenophobic, and tilted toward Europe. If one is perceived as not being part of one of the established American philosophical families, European in philosophical tradition, or part of the American community, then one is left out: one is thought to belong elsewhere or what one does is thought not to be philosophy. These are the two ways of disenfranchising philosophers: locating them in a non-European or non-American tradition, or classifying what they do as non-philosophical. Hence, Hispanics in general are excluded unless we can prove that we truly belong to one of the accepted groups, think in European terms, or are part of the American community. And we can prove this only by forgetting most of what has to do with our identity as Hispanics, by becoming clones of American philosophers, and by joining one of the established philosophical families. We must forget who we are; we must forget where we came from; and we must forget our culture and values. Don't wave your hands; don't speak enthusiastically; speak slowly and make frequent pauses; adopt the Oxford stuttering technique; look insecure; be cynical and doubtful; buy yourself tweed jackets if you are male, and try to look like Apple Annie if you are female. In short, become what the others want you to become, otherwise there is no place for you.

Hispanics who are fast and articulate in conversation are perceived as glib and arrogant. Hispanics who have a strong sense of humor, and laugh freely, are regarded as not serious. And Hispanics who speak with an accent are thought to be uncouth and unintellectual.³⁸

Let's suppose that Gracia's remarks resonate for many, although presumably not all, self-identified Hispanic/Latinx philosophers. An important aspect of Gracia's discussion is that these phenomena get their significance from the structure of disciplinary incentives and ordinary in-group/

out-group dynamics. At risk of oversimplifying his nuanced account, Gracia's picture in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* holds that

- 1) Philosophers are members of groups, and those groups are typically defined genetically, that is, by advisor or institution, and by one's subfield.
- 2) Many individual philosophers want attention on their work.
- 3) Attention typically comes from overlapping or allied groups (i.e., in-groups), but there is a limited quantity of attention available in professionally recognized fora (e.g., journals and conferences).
- 4) So, there is an incentive to control access to attention. Those efforts to control attention manifest in hostile referee reports on work by those perceived to be out-group members. Similar judgments affect access to journals and conferences.
- 5) Philosophers marked as out-group members, or as marginal cases of in-group membership, will have more hurdles accessing disciplinary tools of influence, prestige, and visibility.
- 6) These challenges are endemic for Hispanic/Latinx philosophers, in virtue of their being perceived as foreign, and given their very small numbers in the profession.
- 7) There is a double estrangement when Hispanic/Latinx philosophers work in fields (such as Latin American philosophy) that lack robust genetic networks in the US, and that are thus perceived as neither part of the analytic world nor part of the Continental world of philosophy.

The first five points are difficult to dispute as a characterization of the profession. Indeed, they plausibly generalize to other academic fields.³⁹ Importantly, they have a motivationally recognizable basis. No one has time to read everything, and given the fact of finite time and attention, academics rely upon heuristics and other filtering tools to shape and direct their attention. Where matters are more complicated is the degree to which these factors play greater and lesser roles in the outcomes of individual cases, and the contexts in which locally sensible mechanisms have systematically unreasonable effects.

For present purposes, though, Gracia's remarks on the last two points are especially telling. First, he holds that there are various markers of foreignness that Hispanic/Latinxs will disproportionately give evidence of—the ways in which they will be coded as outsiders because of their (variable) distance from the cultural norms that are paradigmatic of the profession. Second, these markers of foreignness will be compounded if one has an interest in philosophical matters outside those things regarded as canonical in the major social groups in Anglophone philosophy. As Gracia puts it, "Hispanics who show any interest in Hispanic issues,

or Hispanic thought, are perceived as foreigners because they do not fit into the philosophical groups that dominate [U.S.] American philosophy. . . . The only way Hispanics have of entering the world of Hispanic philosophy is to become what [U.S.] American philosophers consider acceptable; Hispanics must prove we belong."⁴⁰

To my ear, Gracia is substantially anticipating the point made by his interlocutors in response to Gracia's later work *Latinos in America*.⁴¹ That is, within philosophy in the United States, Hispanics and Latinxs^F face discrimination *qua* Hispanics and Latinxs, and especially if they are interested in philosophy produced by Hispanics. If that is right, then being a Latino^F in philosophy (and elsewhere, presumably) *involves being subject to distinctive social meanings and experiences*.

These considerations suggest that we do well *not* to revise or replace LATINX in the manner he suggests. This conclusion does not vitiate the thought that there are important and contextually salient links between Latinxs^F, Latin Americans, and Hispanics more generally. There are surely some contexts where focusing on Latinxs is not especially explanatory, or where even if it is, we do better to use other categories. He is surely right that recent work Latinx philosophy shares important intellectual ties to the larger Latin American and Hispanic philosophical lineage,⁴² and we might reasonably ask what sorts of pictures are ignored, undermined, or obscured when we focus on those connections. It might be true that Latin American philosophy is, to an important degree, Hispanic philosophy; it might also be true that thinking in these ways is not especially useful if we are interested in, for example, the present and history of Indigenous thought in the Americas and its influence in thought and practice in Latin America.

In short, we have reason to accept Gracia's account of Hispanics, reason to resist his account of Latinxs, and reason to take seriously his insights into the conditions of Latinx, Latin American, and Hispanic philosophers more generally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).
2. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).
3. Herman Cappelen and David Plunkett, "Introduction: A Guided Tour of Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics," in *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, ed. Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1–26.

4. David, Plunkett, "Which Concepts Should We Use?: Metalinguistic Negotiations and the Methodology of Philosophy," *Inquiry* 58, no. 7-8 (2015): 828-74.
5. Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" *Noûs* 34, no. 1 (2000): 31-55.
6. Manuel Vargas, "Revisionism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Free Will*, ed. Joseph Campbell, Kristin Mickelson, and V. Alan White (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming).
7. See Manuel Vargas, "Latinx Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/latinx/>; Andrea Pitts, "Latinx Identity," in *Latin American and Latinx Philosophy*, ed. Robert Eli Sanchez, 220-41 (New York: Routledge, 2020); and Paula Ramos, *Finding Latinx: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 2020).
8. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 18.
9. Cf. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48, 51.
10. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 50.
11. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 139.
12. The argument I am making here is compatible with there being natural language terms that pick out unprincipled disjunctions of properties that resist demands for orderly classification. For all I have said, it could still turn out that there is no unifying story to be told about Hispanics or families or games, which, on the present approach, would give us reason to regard these ordinary language terms as somewhat disorganized ways of carving up the world. My point is that this possibility does not, by itself, give us a reason for thinking there is never some unifying story to be told about kinds with diverse first-order substantive properties.
13. If one is comfortable with talk of properties, as Gracia is, then it seems one should countenance the existence of higher-order properties. See Chris Swoyer and Francesco Orilia, "Properties," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2011), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/properties/>. And again, quite apart from one's favorite views about the metaphysics of properties, it is useful for ordinary discourse to be able to say there is something (however abstract) that is shared by all members of the category, albeit in varying degrees.
14. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48.
15. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48-49.
16. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 49.
17. The minimalism of this ethnic group account is different than the minimalism of Michael Hardimon's notion of the minimalist concept of race. See Hardimon, *Rethinking Race: The Case for Deflationary Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 27-64. On that account, minimalist race involves common geographic origin, common ancestry, and patterns of visible physical features.
18. Cf. Ernesto Rosen Velásquez, "Is the 'Common Bundle View' of Ethnicity Problematic?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 3 (2011): 325-44.
19. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48.
20. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 3.
21. Thanks to Dan Speak for pressing the question about what Gracia wants to say about pre-1492 Iberians.
22. Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 100.
23. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 38.
24. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 57.
25. Renzo Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 73.
26. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latinos>, accessed on January 31, 2022.
27. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, second ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989).
28. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 70-88.
29. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 129, 139-43.
30. María Cristina González and Nora Stigol, "Gracia on Latino and Latin American Philosophy," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 79-90.
31. González and Stigol, "Gracia on Latino and Latin American Philosophy," 81.
32. Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," 73.
33. Lori Gallegos has observed that there is an interesting demographic pattern that may be worth noting in this context: in the last quarter century, a remarkably high number of prominent senior Hispanic and Latinx philosophers in the United States were born outside of the US (for example, Gracia, Lugones, Schutte, Alcoff, Medina, Mendieta, Ortega, Sosa, Rayo, Sartorio, Comesaña, Morton). My sense is that the demographic distribution on this is changing, but even allowing for the fact of small numbers, it is notable how few visible senior US-born Hispanic/Latinxs there are in philosophy. I don't know whether Gracia had things to say about this, and for my own part I am not sure what to say about this pattern. Nevertheless, we can imagine that someone might speculate that this demographic pattern partly explains the appeal to Gracia of construing LATINX in a way that counts Latin Americans not in the US as Latinx: for Latin American-born Latinxs, ongoing ties to Latin America remain especially salient in their identity conception as Latinxs.
34. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," 107.
35. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," 107.
36. Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 226-46.
37. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 159-88.
38. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 182-83.
39. Michèle Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
40. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 186.
41. Gracia, *Latinos in America*.
42. Vargas, "Latinx Philosophy."

Gracia's Latest View on Latin American Philosophy

Susana Nuccetelli
ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

I.

Although Jorge Gracia often gave evidence of his kin interest in the history of Latin American philosophy, he did not neglect to consider some hard metaphilosophical questions about this discipline which have been at the center of a heated debate since at least the mid-twentieth century. In a number of works, Gracia characterized them as concerning matters of Latin American philosophy's disciplinary existence, identity, characteristics, originality, and authenticity.¹ He also attempted to throw some clarity in that debate by noting that its major participants tend to defend perspectives that fall within what he labeled "universalism," "culturalism," and a "critical view."² On his own view, neither of these competitors captures the nature of Latin American philosophy. As I noted elsewhere his 2003 objection to skepticism about the discipline based on its lack of originality was particularly³ insightful, given that

this property hardly qualifies as a necessary condition for the existence of any area of philosophy.⁴ After all, when construed as the requirement that, to be of value, the works in a philosophical area must be absolutely novel, originality sets the standard too high: only a few works in any area can possibly meet it.

In *Latinos in America* of 2008 Gracia offers his own positive account of the nature of Latin American philosophy, the so-called ethnic-philosophy, which he takes to be the best alternative to universalism, culturalism, and the critical view. In this book he also refers to the discipline as “Latino philosophy,” a practice that I’ll adopt hereafter in order to focus on whether Gracia’s alternative can capture the nature of Latino philosophy. I’ll argue that it cannot because it engenders either extreme skepticism about the field or an anything-goes type of relativism. Either way, the ethnic-philosophy account has demonstrably bad practical consequences not only for Latino philosophy but also for any other field that might come out as an ethnic philosophy on Gracia’s account.

II.

In *Latinos in America* Gracia offers some insightful discussions of the rich experiences of Latin Americans and their descendants in the United States.⁵ Of special interest to us here is this book’s novel view that Latino philosophy is a form of “ethnic philosophy.” According to Gracia, this way of understanding the nature of this discipline might resolve a number of questions concerning its adequate name and identity that have been at the center of the abovementioned debate. For, unlike the traditional branches of philosophy, an ethnic philosophy has an open subject matter. What to include in it is determined entirely by the relevant ethnos or group of people, whether this be a Latino ethnos, an African ethnos, etc.⁶ Thus if the Latino ethnos decides to include in its philosophy the major philosophical traditions of the West, then those traditions too would be part of the discipline—together with whichever traditions peculiar to Latin America they also decide to include.⁷ Unlike other views on the nature of Latino philosophy—argues Gracia—the ethnic-philosophy account avoids regarding any single property (e.g., language, geographical location, place of birth, etc.) as necessary and sufficient for inclusion in Latino philosophy. But in other works, I have shown, first, that he is wrong about this advantage of the ethnic-philosophy conception since given his account the property of being accepted for inclusion by the Latino people turns out to be necessary and sufficient for counting as Latino philosophy any philosophical tradition or theory.⁸ Second, this conception of Latino philosophy is too broad because it has the implausible consequence that, say, David Sosa’s work in philosophy of language or mind might count as Latino philosophy provided the Latino people were to decide to include it.

In addition, the ethnic-philosophy conception faces a dilemma that I take up next, which runs as follows: if Latino philosophy is a form of ethnic philosophy as defined by Gracia, either skepticism (and even nihilism) or relativism about this discipline is true. Either way, the ethnic-philosophy conception fuels some existing biases about Latino philosophy and may therefore contribute to

its insularity in the profession—a bad state of affairs that Gracia himself tried to remedy. That the ethnic-philosophy account entails skepticism and even nihilism follows from its relying on the implausible assumption that, eventually, the Latino people will eventually agree on what to include in their philosophy. That they could ever reach such a consensus seems highly unlikely. After all, take a subgroup of the Latino people, the professional Latino philosophers, who are of many different philosophical persuasions and have engaged in countless philosophical disputes never reaching even a minimal consensus. It is highly unlikely that Latino philosophers will eventually converge on what to include in the discipline. As a result, if the ethnic-philosophy account is true, at present there is no justification for any claim about what falls within Latino philosophy. And it seems implausible that at the end of the day they will converge on what works, traditions, etc. count as Latino philosophy. With no consensus in sight, skepticism and even nihilism would follow.

Now suppose that the above skepticism could be brushed aside on the basis that no such consensus is necessary for determining the scope of Latino philosophy. Thus construed, Gracia’s account entails an anything-goes form of relativism about Latino philosophy since whether a work, tradition, etc. falls within its scope would be simply a matter of opinion. To illustrate, let’s briefly consider some recent claims that Latino philosophy should devote itself exclusively to certain issues of social and political theory. For example, after embracing Gracia’s ethnic-philosophy account, José Antonio Orosco maintains that Latino philosophers should focus on developing the philosophical perspectives of their own ethnic groups on “questions about [Latino] identity, power, and citizenship in the United States.”⁹ If the aim here is limiting the scope of Latino philosophy to those topics, Gracia himself would be committed to rejecting Orosco’s proposal since he consistently defended an expansive view of the areas of philosophical interest amenable to Latino philosophy’s inquiry. He would also be committed to rejecting Grant Silva’s proposal according to which Latino philosophy, conceived as an ethnic philosophy, should concern itself solely with the Latino people’s struggle against coloniality.¹⁰

Arguably, the topics of these proposals are best amenable to the inquiries of historians and the social scientists. If Latino philosophers were to embrace such proposals, that could only have some bad consequences for the standing of their discipline in the profession—a consequence that Gracia himself would regret in light of his attempts to improve its standing.¹¹ Although matters of applied social and political philosophy have traditionally attracted considerable interest within the discipline, philosophical inquiry should be understood as an inherently open-minded enterprise guided by intellectual curiosity and the need to get us closer to the truth on a great variety of domains. If Latino philosophy is conceived as having only instrumental value as a means for, say, social and economic change, the quest for improving its status in the profession would be undermined. After all, philosophers commonly lack the knowledge necessary to develop scientifically acceptable theories of social and economic change, and are thus susceptible to making unsupported empirical claims that

can only contribute to the present insularity of Latino philosophy. As often noted, when made by philosophers, such claims are suspect of merely amounting to armchair sociology or political science.¹²

To sum up, I have argued that the ethnic-philosophy theorists can avoid an extreme skepticism about Latino philosophy only at the price of dropping the need for convergence among the Latino people about what counts as part of this field of philosophical inquiry. But if they do so, it becomes unclear how they might avoid an anything-goes type of metaphilosophical relativism because an acceptance by the relevant ethnos would be the only standard of inclusion within Latin philosophy. As shown above, this move opens the door to some reductionist proposals about the nature of Latino philosophy. Either extreme metaphilosophical position would undermine the perception of Latino philosophy in the United States—an outcome that Gracia would have regretted since, as is well known, he went the extra mile to raise this discipline's standing in the profession.

NOTES

1. See Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Latin American Philosophy Today," *The Philosophical Forum* 1-2 (1988-89): 4-32; Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); and *Forging People: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a Thought*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).
2. Gracia takes universalism to be represented by the philosophy-as-such position of Risieri Frondizi, culturalism by the perspectivism of Leopoldo Zea, and the critical view by the Marxist critique of Latin American philosophy of Augusto Salazar Bondy.
3. See Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Ethnic Labels and Philosophy: The Case of Latin American Philosophy," in *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 57-67.
4. Susana Nuccetelli, "Latin American Philosophy: Metaphilosophical Foundations," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Zalta (2021/2013), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/latin-american-metaphilosophy/>.
5. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 140 ff.
6. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 142-44.
7. Note that this view is inconsistent with Gracia and Vargas in their 2013/2018 characterization in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, according to which "in its most expansive sense, Latin American philosophy is philosophy produced in Latin America or philosophy produced by persons of Latin American ancestry who reside outside of Latin America." See Jorge J. E. Gracia and Manuel Vargas, "Latin American Philosophy," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Zalta (2013/2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/latin-american-philosophy/>.
8. See Susana Nuccetelli, "Gracia on Ethnic Philosophy," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 1 (2010): 36-43; and Susana Nuccetelli, *An Introduction to Latin American Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
9. José-Antonio Orosco, "The Philosophical Gift of Brown Folks: Mexican American Philosophy in the United States," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2016): 27.
10. Grant Silva, "Why the Struggle Against Coloniality Is Paramount to Latin American Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2015): 8-12.
11. Gracia objects to biases against Latino philosophy in the United States most notably in the final chapter of *Hispanic-Latino Identity*. He particularly laments the indifference toward this

discipline of the academic philosophical establishment and even of Hispanic philosophers themselves. On his account, this regrettable situation is due to the fact that Hispanics in the United States are seen as outsiders, as foreigners, even if native-born. As a result, Hispanic who work in Latino philosophy face an undeserved marginalization that needs to end.

12. On my view, eliminating the marginalization problem facing Latino philosophers requires them to focus on philosophical questions, avoiding questions that are better treated with the tools of other humanities or the social sciences. For more on this, see Susana Nuccetelli, "Latino Philosophy," in *Oxford Handbook of Latino Studies*, ed. I. Stavans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 199-218, DOI: [10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190691202.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190691202.001.0001); and Susanna Siegel, "Reflections on the Use of English and Spanish in Analytic Philosophy," in *Informes del Observatorio / Observatorio Reports* (Cambridge, MA: Instituto Cervantes, Harvard University, 2014), http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/006_informes_ss_analytic_philosophy.pdf.

BOOK REVIEW

Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy

Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda (Lexington Books, 2020). 156 pp. ISBN 978-1-4985-6053-5.

Reviewed by Amy Reed-Sandoval
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda's *Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy: From Ciudad Juárez to Ayotzinapa* is ambitious, well-researched, and extremely informative. It is also almost medical in these trying times, helping us to dream of a better future and a better world at a perilous time.

Throughout this book, Díaz Cepeda expertly draws his readers into his philosophical analyses through a series of real, wrenching stories about how multilayered and ever-evolving Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) in Mexico have fought to oppose grave injustices. He shows that even when it seems that they have failed to bring about the societal transformations for which they fought (and continue to fight), their work remains extraordinarily valuable—not only inasmuch as it brings about "smaller successes" on a political scale, but also because their work contributes to the "permanent state of rebellion" that Díaz Cepeda considers vital to democratic flourishing. Without explicitly saying so, Luis presents Mexico, his *país de origen y país de residencia*, as emblematic of an emerging state of rebellion from which the rest of world—and perhaps the United States and other English-dominant countries in particular, given his decision to publish this work in English—can and should learn.

In what follows I offer a brief summary of the chapters of Luis's book. Then, I will discuss what I consider to be some of the book's most important virtues. Finally, I will raise a series of questions in response to this wonderful work, all of which are offered in the spirit of learning, collaboration, and friendship.

First, a brief overview. *Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy* is, once again, grounded in detailed,

well-researched discussion of several social movements that came to prominence in Mexico's recent history. Díaz Cepeda first explores the activism opposing the Felipe Calderón-led militarization of Ciudad Juárez in 2008, which ostensibly occurred in the name of combatting narco-violence actually was a means of brutal population control. Part of this activism, he notes, entailed educating skeptical residents of Juárez about the real "point" of the military violence, for a vital task of SMOs is to bring about a change of political consciousness.

Later on in the book, Díaz Cepeda tells the related story of the Movement for Peace and Justice with Dignity (MPJD), which effectively nationalized the ideals of the Juárez-based activism against Calderón's deadly agenda, once again changing Mexico's political consciousness. Third, he gives a remarkably detailed account of the disappearance of forty-three student-activists of the Raúl Isidro Burgos Normal School in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero who were violently attacked in the Mexican state of Guerrero while engaged in protest against governmental corruption. Díaz Cepeda shows how parents of the disappeared joined forces with a variety of national and international Social Movement Organizations to demand that the missing forty-three be returned alive. In many cases, they also demanded a radical social transformation in Mexico and beyond. This activism, occurring as it frequently did on an international stage, served to shift political consciousness beyond Mexico's borders.

A great deal of Díaz Cepeda's philosophical analysis of these stories focuses on the fact that the SMOs in question often had divergent aims and political orientations. He explores how this can sometimes weaken their protests of the unjust events that compelled them to join forces to begin with. He provides some conceptual resources for mediating such conflicts, but chooses to spend more time exploring the benefits of collaboration of divergent organizations. Given that Díaz Cepeda ultimately advocates a permanent "state of rebellion" in response to the endless "state of exception" in which we live, the conflicts that arise when different SMOs attempt to collaborate can actually *help us* to think critically about the kinds of social transformation we want to bring about. In other words, debates among SMOs can keep us from "resting on our laurels" and becoming both satisfied and complacent with the tiny scraps of "progress" that powerful politicians occasionally throw to us.

While Díaz Cepeda ultimately embraces Enrique Dussel's vision of the transmodern state that is both anti-capitalist and premised upon the efforts of political representatives to obey the commands of society's victims, he carves out a vital space, within this political vision, for SMOs that may directly oppose the very legitimacy of the state in question. In his words, "social movement organizations should not be perceived as a failure of democracy, but as a triumph and essential component as they allow for sudden and necessary transitions between formal political institutions, the state being the higher level, and civil society" (111).

Once again, if you need a dose of hope right now—and don't mind it doled out to you in the form of academic philosophy—then you ought to read this book as soon

as you can. This is especially true if you find yourself engaged in activism that has regularly failed to bring about your desired result. Apart from its inspirational nature—it *genuinely* makes you want to jump out of your arm chair and get to work—Díaz Cepeda's book is also a terrific source of information about Mexico's recent, turbulent politics.

Beyond all this, *Social Movements and Latin American Political Philosophy* is also, in my view, a major contribution to Latin American philosophy. In highlighting Mexico's own state of rebellion, it shows, even more than it explicitly tells, that Latin America (and particularly, in this case, Mexico), is a world center of political thought and transformation, despite being located on the periphery of global power. Furthermore, the book is not only political, but also epistemological, for it demonstrates that Mexican activists possess an epistemic standpoint oriented toward political and politicized rebellion that functioning democracies sorely need. It is also a careful, serious, critical engagement of Dusselian political philosophy. Finally, political philosophers of all orientations would benefit from familiarizing themselves with Díaz Cepeda's detailed account of a permanent state of rebellion.

I now want to turn to a few critical questions that the book brought up for me—offered, once again, in the spirit of camaraderie and friendship. Some of these comments are connected to "hard conversations" that are currently happening in Mexican politics, particularly in relation to Mexico's current president, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, and his relationship to feminists. Before doing so, I want to make clear that some of the political debates I will refer to happened after Díaz Cepeda wrote this book. All of these comments are meant to generate philosophical conversation about what I consider to be an important philosophical topic with important connections to Mexican politics and *Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy*.

My first question pertains to Díaz Cepeda's rejection of political liberalism. As is the case of a great deal of Latin American political philosophy, when Luis refers to "liberalism" he is referring, in the main, to free market liberalism—neoliberalism—that endorses the so-called "free market" as the solution to all social problems, and fails to see human "individuals" as fundamentally interconnected, relational, community-embedded beings. I wonder, however, why Díaz Cepeda doesn't engage more radical strands of liberalism, such as Black radical liberalism and feminist relational egalitarianism, which directly critique both unchecked free markets and the erroneous metaphysical conception of human individuals as atomistic in nature.

I do believe that a great deal of Latin American political philosophy presents "liberalism" exclusively in terms of neoliberalism, despite the fact that this is a political ideology that liberal egalitarians explicitly reject. Usually, I don't question this. For why should those working in Latin American philosophy spend precious time reading about radical strands of liberalism, particularly those developed in the US, when they can turn instead to Latin American philosophy to address pressing social problems? (In other

words, why should a Latin American philosopher bend over backwards to use Rawls when they can use Dussel for their desire aims?)

In the case of *Social Movements and Latin American Philosophy*, however, I believe that liberal egalitarianism does have an important resource to offer—namely, a tradition of defending minority rights against a so-called tyranny of the majority. The idea behind liberal minority rights is that human beings have a moral worth that ought to be protected in the form of inalienable rights, and that these rights ought to be defended even if the majority would like to do otherwise (usually for self-serving purposes).

Why do I regard this as particularly relevant to *Social Movements*? As Díaz Cepeda himself acknowledges, SMOs, including the most progressive among them, can serve to further marginalize the rights of the most vulnerable members of society. A recent example of this can be found in the well-documented tensions between Mexico's current president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (whom Díaz Cepeda rather quietly celebrates in the book as a leftist and progressive outcome of progressive mobilization in Mexico, and with whose government Dussel himself self-identifies in his forward to the book), and Mexican feminists. Lopez Obrador has accused feminists who object to his agenda as having been manipulated by his conservative enemies. He notoriously claimed that battered women making emergency calls during a wave of domestic violence occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic were actually making "fake calls." Lopez Obrador has failed to support abortion rights (abortion remains illegal in almost all instances in most of Mexico) and he has publicly supported, against the objections of feminists, a major political candidate who was credibly accused of rape.

When Lopez Obrador gets challenged in these ways, particularly by his feminist critics, he often says he wants to put the matter up for "popular consultation," to let "the people decide." In this sense, he presents himself as the sort of politician that Díaz Cepeda's political vision supports. However, in the case of legalizing abortion in Mexico, many Mexican feminists have made the argument that sexism on the part of "the people" will make legalizing abortion through *consulta popular* impossible. Instead, they argue that as human beings with dignity, they have a right to abortion care—they have individual, inalienable rights to make decisions about their own bodies. This is the sort of insight that one finds in careful accounts of liberal minority rights.

This, then, is my worry: that a system of political philosophy that eschews certain advantages of liberal egalitarianism (like minority rights) and depends upon the "voice of the people" and "the oppressed" as prevailing over unjust forces will, in the end, fail to protect some of the most vulnerable members of society. Of course, Díaz Cepeda strongly advocates for SMOs to be self-critical, and to listen to their most vulnerable members. But how long should women and other vulnerable members of society wait for that to truly happen?

I also wonder about Díaz Cepeda's characterization of SMOs. What role, if any, should conservative SMOs have in the ideal society that Luis visualizes? Would their presence constitute evidence of a "healthy democracy" that is tolerant of diverse views? Or, on the contrary, should conservative SMOs be banned?

Finally, returning to the spirit of hope with which the pages of *Social Movements* are brimming, despite the incredibly sad content engaged: the book left me wanting to read more about the "state of rebellion" advocated by Díaz Cepeda. Beyond involvement in SMOs, how can we cultivate this epistemic orientation? What educational practices and art forms serve to promote it? And, on the flipside, what institutions and practices put it in danger? This is perhaps too much to ask of a single monograph. I raise this questions because it is a virtue of the book that it inspires them.

AUTHOR BIOS

Susana Nuccetelli is professor of philosophy at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. She has published many articles in Latin American philosophy, ethics, and philosophy of language and mind. She is the author of three monographs (Westview Press 2002, Cambridge University Press 2020, Routledge 2022), and has also edited a volume of new essays and co-edited several reference books and anthologies.

Amy Reed-Sandoval is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She is the author of *Socially Undocumented: Identity and Immigration Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2020), and co-editor of *Latin American Immigration Ethics* (University of Arizona Press, 2021). She is also the founding director of the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program at the Mexico-US border.

Teófilo Reis is a PhD candidate in philosophy at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and a PhD student in sociology at the University of Campinas, Brazil. His research interests include philosophy of race, Latin American philosophy, black Brazilian political thinking, Brazilian social thinking, sociology of the intellectuals, social epistemology, and political philosophy.

Ernesto Rosen Velásquez is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Dayton. He specializes in decolonial thought, Latinx and Latin American philosophy, critical philosophy of race and political philosophy. He is author of *Decolonizing the Westernized University* which he co-edited with Ramón Grosfoguel and Roberto D. Hernández (Lexington Press, 2016).

Manuel Vargas is professor of philosophy at the University of California, San Diego. His research and teaching concerns the history Latin American philosophy, contemporary Latinx philosophy, free will, moral responsibility, and moral psychology more generally. He sometimes publishes books and articles about these things.

Gabriel Zamosc is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado Denver. His research interests include Nietzsche, action theory, and moral and political philosophy. He has mostly published articles that investigate Nietzsche's positive moral ideals, such as those of freedom, sovereignty, wholeness, and the like.