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Review of *El Pensamiento Filosófico Latinoamericano, del Caribe y "latino" [1300-2000]: Historia, Corrientes, Temas, Filósofos*

Grant J. Silva

Marquette University, [grant.silva@marquette.edu](mailto:grant.silva@marquette.edu)

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Grant Silva was affiliated with Illinois Institute of Technology at the time of publication.

combinations so as to comprise not only European and Amerindians, but also Africans and mixed-raced groups.

3. Samuel Huntington, *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 243, apud Alcoff, Linda Martín, "Comparative Race, Comparative Racisms," in *Black Ethnicity/Latino Race?* ed. Jorge Gracia (Cornell University Press, 2007).

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### ***El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano, del Caribe y "latino" [1300-2000]: Historia, Corrientes, Temas, Filósofos***

Enrique Dussel, Eduardo Mendieta, Carmen Bohórquez (Eds.). (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 2009.) 1111 pp.

**Reviewed by Grant J. Silva**

*Sawyer Dissertation Fellow at the Illinois Institute of Technology*

How does one present an overview of seven centuries of Latin American philosophy when much of the subject matter has been ignored, marginalized, and/or eclipsed by European and Anglo-American philosophical interests? Enrique Dussel, Eduardo Mendieta, and Carmen Bohórquez tackle this daunting task in their edited work, *El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano, del Caribe y "latino" [1300-2000]*.<sup>1</sup> Authored by an international team of researchers, professional academics, and philosophers, this volume—a formidable one thousand one hundred and eleven pages long—presents the history of philosophical thought in pre-Columbian America, colonial Iberian America, and contemporary Latin America (including the Caribbean and even amongst Latino/as in the United States). In addition, it contains over two hundred biographical sketches of philosophers from all of these regions and eras (not to mention an eighty-two page single space bibliography). Perhaps anticipating the above question, Dussel introduces the volume by writing: "This work was designed as the beginning of a continental philosophical *movement*, rather than just a book."<sup>2</sup> As such, this volume stands as a collective philosophical resurgence of the Latin American masses.

*El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano* is an incredible resource for anyone researching Spanish-language or Latin American philosophy. With entries on analytic philosophy, phenomenology, logic, scholasticism, conservatism, liberalism, feminism, the philosophy of education, and aesthetics, this work explores general topics that *any* philosopher capable of reading Spanish can appreciate. In addition, the entries pertaining to colonialism, indigenous thought, the philosophy of liberation, positive/anti-positivist thought, the various independence movements of the region (including decolonization and recent indigenous politics), and current trends in Latin American political philosophy are sure to capture the interests of those working in Latin American or even "Hispanic" philosophy in the United States.

This volume consists of four parts: (I) historical epochs (broken into three subsections), (II) philosophical currents of the twentieth century, (III) general philosophical themes, and (IV) biographical sketches of various philosophers or *pensadores*. Dussel introduces each section, which, given his

wealth of knowledge and desire to construct a truly global or world philosophy, presents the history of Latin American thought from a foremost expert in the field. A thinker whose entire philosophical corpus can likewise be catalogued, Dussel provides his take on such issues as the origins of modernity and abstract philosophical ideas—his comments on the question of "indigenous philosophy" versus "ethno-philosophy" or "myth" serves as example (see pp. 17-20).

Part I begins with an overview of several indigenous responses to what Dussel labels "nuclear" or core philosophical problems, i.e., those questions that all humans bound to social groups and confined to the human psyche are forced to contend with (p. 15). Not only are such peoples as the Nahuatl (Aztec) and Maya present, but lesser-known indigenous peoples (from a U.S. standpoint) such as the Mapuche, Guaraní, Tojolabal, and Quechua are also found in this subsection. Worth noting is Miguel Leon-Portilla's entry on the Nahuatl philosophical tradition, a summation of much of his research on Nahuatl culture (p. 21). Upon reviewing this section one can only imagine how much philosophical thought was lost during the conquest of America. As an example, take the entry on the Tojolabal—people of Mayan descent living in southeast Mexico. The Tojolabal meaning of *nosotros* (or "we") refers to the main agent of their social ontology, the "community," "people," or *pueblo*. This *nosotros*, which consists of a community without social hierarchy or political imbalances, not only sheds new light on the significance of contemporary indigenous *social* movements but also reveals alternative philosophical practices that do not begin with the individual (p. 33).

Next is the colonial, early modern epoch. The fact that early modern thought is mentioned at the same time as colonization and the colonial mentality reflects the Latin American philosophical commitment to what has been dubbed "the underside of modernity." Dussel's entry on "The First Philosophical Debate of Modernity" is helpful here: a synopsis of several books and recent essays, Dussel holds that the first philosophical debates of the modern era are found in the ethical justifications (or lack thereof) of the Iberian invasion of America and the subsequent colonization of indigenous people. For him, the debates and works of Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda not only exhibit the modern emphasis on "the public exercise of reason," but their subsequent philosophical-anthropological range of questions (i.e., "Are the indigenous humans?" "What right do we have to take over this region?" and "Can they be saved?") blossomed into the more distinctively *modern* problematic. While it remains possible to view the history of modern philosophy as a uniquely Eurocentric phenomenon—that is, without reference to the Americas or colonization in general—the modern fixation with progress and the further accumulation or maturation of knowledge began with the recognition of immature, child-like beings, the product of backward or primitive cultures. Thus, Dussel argues, at the base of all modern thought (from the fifteenth until the twenty-first century) is the anti-discursive tendency to obviate non-Western epistemologies and ontological frameworks in the name of progress, maturity, and salvation. Modern thought is inherently anti-dialogical because it undermines the possibility for critical engagement with philosophical worldviews that do not begin on equal footing, namely, "reason" as opposed to myth, tradition, or the simply the possibility of some other epistemic foundation (see pp. 55-66).

The last subsection of part I pertains to the Latin American philosophical climate of late modernity or the Enlightenment. This subsection demonstrates how romantic, liberal, conservative, and even Krausian ideals were incorporated to Latin America, often at the service of various independence

movements of the nascent Latin American republics. Given how some would consider the nineteenth-century nation-building movement as the historical precursor to a distinctively “Latin” America, Leonardo Tovar González’s entry on the foundations of Latin American philosophy proves worthwhile in this sense. The purpose of González’s entry is to provide a brief account of the various “foundations” of Latin American philosophy, from the indigenous to the Spanish, “Latin Americanist” to intercultural (pp. 255-261).

Part II explores the main philosophical currents that abound in Latin America in the twentieth century. I venture to say that this section (and the subsequent) will be of interest to most philosophers since the currents of thought that are presented range from such topics as existential and Christian philosophies to feminist philosophy and bioethics. The entry on Caribbean philosophy and the work of C.L.R. James and Sylvia Winter (by Carlos Rojas Osorio and Paget Henry, see pp. 479), in addition to those by Eduardo Mendieta (on Latino philosophy in the United States, see p. 518) and Ricardo Gómez (the philosophy of science, p. 335) provide great overviews of their respective topics.

Part III presents the history of general philosophical themes in Latin America. Such topics include ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, philosophy of history, philosophy of economics, multiculturalism, and even philosophy for youth. The entry on ethics provides an example of how general philosophical themes are made relevant in light of Latin American history. As Ricardo Maliandi shows, with the advent of positivism in Latin America, ethics became intertwined with social platforms aimed at improving the region. This had a drastic effect of education, politics, and value theory, such that ethical enterprises had a more normative or practical import in Latin America when compared to other regions (see pp. 526-541).

There is no doubt that many will be drawn to the entries entitled: “Indigeneity: From Integration to Autonomy” (by Héctor Díaz-Polaco), “From Aimé Césaire to the Zapatistas” (by Ramón Grosfoguel), “Decolonial Thought, Generosity and Openness” (by Walter Mignolo), and “The Philosophical Thought of the Decolonial Turn” (by Nelson Maldonado-Torres) (see pp. 647-683). These entries provide a veritable introduction to decolonization and de-coloniality. Decolonization is not just about nation-building, national autonomy, or the removal of colonial elite, but more importantly the identification and elimination of power dynamics entrenched in the colonial process, i.e., “coloniality.” Whereas it can be argued that “post-colonialism” is the first step towards ending imperial regimes, simply creating autonomous nations (as opposed to colonies) does nothing to target forms of oppression that replicate or maintain colonial atmospheres by incorporating grotesque gender and racial stratifications. I think this is a great lesson for political and social philosophers to learn from Latin American thinkers.

The last part of this volume consists of an assortment of biographies of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino/a philosophers. As a researcher interested in Latin American philosophy for over 10 years, I am only familiar with a few of the names presented in this section. This can either speak towards my impoverished knowledge of Latin American philosophy or reveal the fact that there is an assortment of philosophers that have yet to be discovered by Latino philosophers in the United States (probably both). Seeing how Latino/as are also present in this section, the editors of this text intend on showing the inherent transnational aspects of Latin American thought. This transnationalism is perhaps engendered by the reality of colonization, something that all Latino/as in their respective regions are unable to avoid, at least in one way or another.

One area where this work could be improved is on the topic of race and racial thought, a subject of extreme importance throughout the history of Latin America and amongst Latino/as and Caribbean people today. Although race is discussed at various points throughout the text, especially in the context of multiculturalism and de-colonialism, there is no specific entry on this topic. Seeing the philosophical import that an idea like race can have, especially in terms of its practical significance and connection to socioeconomic class level, it might have been better explored as its own theme or current of thought. Nonetheless, this volume is rather successful in its attempt to present both *the history of philosophy in Latin America* and *the history of Latin American philosophy*. I highly recommend it to all in our field.

#### Endnotes

1. México: Siglo XXI: Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe, 2009.
2. The original reads: “Esta obra fue proyectada, más que como un libro, como el inicio de un *movimiento* filosófico continental” (p. 7).

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## SUBMISSIONS

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### Call for papers

The spring 2011 issue of the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* will be open to any topic on Hispanic/Latino philosophy. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All submissions should be limited to 5,000 words (twenty double-spaced pages) and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting.

### Call for book reviews

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

### Deadlines

January 15, 2011

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

Guest Editor: Eduardo García-Ramírez  
Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas  
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México, D.F.  
E-mail: mexphil@gmail.com

### 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.