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The Virtues of Mestizaje:

Lessons from Las Casas on Aztec Human Sacrifice

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1. INTRODUCTION

Western imperialism has received many different types of moral-political justifications, but one of the most historically influential justifications appeals to an allegedly universal form of human nature. In the early modern period this traditional conception of human nature—based on a Western archetype, e.g. Spanish, Dutch, British, French, German—opens up a logical space for considering the inhabitants of previously unknown lands as having a 'less-than-human' nature.[1] This appeal to human nature originally found its inspiration in the philosophy of Aristotle, whose ethical thought pervaded the work of European philosophers at the outset of the early modern period and the modern age of empire. Indeed some Spanish writers—most famously, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (b. 1494)—explicitly appealed to Aristotle's moral-political philosophy in order to justify the conquest of the Americas in the early sixteenth century, for instance to justify war

[1] Cf. Pagden (1986, chaps. 1–2), Alcoff (2017). On the earliest debates concerning the general capacity of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, see Hanke (1974, chap. 1).

against the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples.[2] At the time of European arrival, the Aztec civilization was easily the greatest in Mesoamerica—and yet the Europeans generally considered the Aztec people to be 'barbaric,' i.e. less-than-fully-human.[3]

Despite Aristotle's association with the history of Western imperialism, the past forty years in moral philosophy have seen an explosion of interest in Aristotle's ethics, especially the idea that the virtues are indispensable to a good human life. Today, proponents of an Aristotelian ethics can insist that Aristotle's appeal to human nature can easily allow for—and even celebrate—the wide variety of lifestyles found in different cultural-historical contexts, that it can allow for a more flexible conception of the ways in which human nature is realized in different cultures and historical moments. Several philosophers have even developed accounts of previously overlooked virtues that people will need under conditions of oppression or social marginalization, conditions that are often the result of intercultural imperialism (e.g. Tessman

[2] Beuchot (1998, 28) mentions the Scottish philosopher John Major (Mair) (b. 1467) and the Spanish Bishop Juan de Quevedo (b. 1450) as Sepúlveda's precursors in the appeal to Aristotelian 'natural slaves.' Cf. Hanke (1959, 14–16).

[3] Alcoff (2017, 402) argues that the Eurocentrism involved here essentially involves an epistemology of ignorance: "Such a construction of barbarian identity removes any motivation to learn other ways or creeds. The claim that those designated are inferior and inadequate thinkers is not justified by a study and evaluation of different practices, customs, forms of religiosity, institutions, beliefs, and the like, but simply on the observation that a group is not-Christian or not-rational or *not-self*." She argues that Las Casas recognizes his own perspective *as* a perspective, and hence that he can "see the Other as having a substantive difference, and not simply as a 'not-self'" (2017, 405). Cf. Gutiérrez (1993, passim, and 188–189, quoted below); Beuchot (1998, 26–36). See also Pagden (1986, chap. 4) on the move to considering the native peoples of the Americas to be "nature's children."

2005, Medina 2013). These recent developments flow naturally from an Aristotelian orientation,[4] and such developments should lead us to consider, further, whether the assumptions that enabled Western imperialism might linger enough today to influence contemporary conceptions of the virtues—for instance, unreflective assumptions about European cultural supremacy and American exceptionalism.

My main hypothesis here is that such unreflective and deep-seated cultural prejudices have shaped the Western development of Aristotelian ethics in various ways—as already illustrated in Sepúlveda's appeal to Aristotelian 'natural slaves'—and that such prejudices partially explain the felt need for an extra-ethical foundation for the virtues, one provided by a universal and morally determinative form of human nature. An acknowledgement of the actual world-historical development of Aristotelian ethics would therefore be a first, but crucial step towards developing a more modest, intercultural version of a contemporary neo-Aristotelian ethics—an approach that aims precisely, in its open-endedness and epistemological humility, to supersede any form of imperialism. Such cultural prejudices can obscure a more plausible and open-ended version—an intercultural and self-consciously 'mestizo' version—of a plausible neo-Aristotelian ethics (cf. Beuchot 2005, 126–127).

[4] Philosophers who are explicitly indebted to Aristotle here include Tessman (2005) and Fricker (2007). Recent discussions of epistemic injustice are all ultimately indebted to the revival of Aristotelian ethics in the latter part of the twentieth century. In future work I aim to urge the importance of this genealogical fact for the future development of any plausible neo-Aristotelian ethics: Such an ethics must *embody* epistemic justice.

What I argue in this paper, much more specifically, is that a consideration of the actual historical collision of these two radically distinct belief systems, Christian and Aztec, reveals the possibility—even in the early modern period—of a helpfully 'dialogical' Aristotelianism, one that strains to understand, from within, the perspective of alien others. This dialogical Aristotelianism disavows an 'epistemology of ignorance'—it disavows the need *not* to know, the motivation *not* to learn, something that is arguably essential to Eurocentrism (Alcoff 2017, 402; cf. Mills 2007, Pohlhaus 2012, Fricker 2016). A dialogical Aristotelianism strongly suggests that a philosophical version of 'mestizaje' can enrich the best philosophical accounts of the virtues we have, both now and in future research on moral character (I will return to what, in my view, this type of philosophical 'admixture' will fruitfully include in §5 below).[5]

2. THE AZTECS AS ALIEN OTHERS

In order to illustrate this dialogical version of an Aristotelian ethics, I will discuss two of the central arguments deployed by Bartolomé de Las Casas (b. 1484) in defense of Aztec human

[5] Julio Covarrubias's recent case for 'letting go' of mestizaje rightfully emphasizes concerns about epistemic settler erasure and the logic of elimination that threatens indigenous communities (Covarrubias 2019, §3). But the virtues of mestizaje are directed at the *dominantly* situated paradigm in philosophy, a Eurocentric paradigm which, as Alcoff says, apparently cannot "play well with others" (2017, 401); see also Pappas (2011) on the observations in William James and John Dewey of what North American philosophy and culture can learn from Latin America. Hence it is not true in this context that "to speak of *mestizaje* is to speak … of a kind of cultural genocide that reproduces settler erasures" (Covarrubias, 2019, 6). What is good for the dominantly situated gander is not necessarily good for the marginally situated goose: cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) II.6, 1105a35–1106b7.

sacrifice.[6] This defense was originally delivered in front of the Council of the Indies, a tribunal convened in 1550 by Charles I of Spain—Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire—in order to determine the fate of the native inhabitants of the Indies (our Americas). The question before the Council was whether waging war against the native inhabitants of the Indies was morally justified in order to convert them to the Christian faith. This question seemed urgent given the apparently barbaric nature of the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples—something most notably demonstrated by the religiously sanctioned practice of human sacrifice and the equally morbid practice (or so it was believed: see e.g. Pagden 1986, 80–90) of consuming the flesh of the sacrificial victims. Despite these apparently barbaric practices—which genuinely horrified sixteenth-century Europeans—Las Casas defends the rationality of the Aztec way of life.

The discussion here should not of course be thought to question the gruesome nature of Aztec human sacrifice. One recent historian, drawing on authoritative sources, offers this lurid description:

> In a typical ritual … the helpless individual was confronted with the sight of the great sacrificial stone, stained with blood, which also matted the hair of the magnificently

[6] To speak of the Aztecs here is perfectly appropriate, in spite of the fact that the conquest of Tenochtitlán (1521), the Aztec capital, antedates the debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda at Valladolid (1550–1551). In the minds of sixteenth-century Europeans, nothing compared to what the Spaniards witnessed at Tenochtitlán. Here I am following the lead of Anthony Pagden, who notes that: "The most famous of the Amerindian cannibals were, of course, the Mexica, whose spectacular bouts of human sacrifice were assumed to have been followed by orgiastic feasts on the flesh of the victims" (1982, 83). The example of Aztec human sacrifice has been paradigmatic for late twentieth century moral philosophers interested in intercultural understanding: see e.g. Taylor (2002), Williams (1972, 24–26).

> adorned priests. Seized by these gory apparitions, the victim was stretched backwards over the stone altar, each limb extended by a priest so that the back was arched and the chest stretched taut and raised high toward the heavens. A fifth priest struck open the chest with an obsidian knife, excised the heart with knife and hands and raised the fertile offering to the heavens, displaying to the gods the sacrificial fruit.[7]

Las Casas addresses the question of whether it would be just to wage war against the Aztecs, in the name of Christianity, in order to end this practice and to spare the lives of the innocent victims. The answer he gives is "No."

Las Casas's defiant approach to these issues already shows in his response to a different Spanish pretext for war. According to this different justification, war against the indigenous peoples is justified because they are guilty of killing Christians and therefore guilty of thwarting the spread of Christianity. Las Casas provides a sharp response. It highlights the contemporary relevance of thinking through his arguments—for instance, their relevance in evaluating past and present U.S. policy toward indigenous peoples and their descendants.[8] In response to this initial pretext for war—that war is justified because the Indians kill Christians and prevent the spread of the Gospel—Las Casas responds that although the Indians have indeed killed Christians, they have not killed them *qua* Christians. Rather, the Indians kill Christians *qua* perpetrators of violence,

[7] Dodds Pennock (2008, 21); cf. *Florentine Codex* 2.2.

[8] On the contemporary relevance of the Valladolid debate, see the excellent recent treatment in Santana (2019); see also the magisterial discussion of Las Casas in Gutiérrez (1993). The best short book on the debate in English—which encompasses both its prelude and its aftermath—remains Hanke (1959). See also the more detailed discussion in Hanke (1974).

theft, rape, torture, and murder. This insightful distinction is a distinction of which any Aristotelian can be justly proud. Its contemporary relevance should be obvious.

3. ON ARISTOTELIAN *ENDOXA*

Overall, Las Casas argues that the Aztec way of life "cannot be excused in the sight of God" (that the Mexica are not objectively correct about the propriety of human sacrifice) but that it "can completely be excused in the sight of men" (1974, 221). What this means is that no one can justifiably blame the Aztecs for their violent religious practices—but certainly not the Spaniards.[9] Thus the following line of inquiry, with which Las Casas opens his discussion of human sacrifice, is certainly intended to sting. Las Casas says that, "It would not be right to make war on them for this reason." This is because

> it is difficult to absorb in a short time the truth proclaimed to them … Why will they believe such a proud, greedy, cruel, and rapacious nation? Why will they give up the religion of their ancestors, unanimously approved for so many centuries and supported by the authority of their teachers…? (Las Casas 1974, 221)

In this passage Las Casas gestures toward the first of his two main arguments here, which is that the Aztecs are committing what he calls a 'probable' error. In explaining the nature of probable

[9] For details, see Las Casas (1992). It has been long recognized that for rhetorical and political purposes (this was quite common) Las Casas engages in certain exaggerations of the devastation he documents, especially regarding magnitude (e.g. number of deaths). For contemporary discussions that significantly temper the 'Black Legend' of unparalleled Spanish brutality, see Greer, Mignolo, and Quillian (2007).

error, as he sees it, Las Casas makes direct reference to Aristotle's *Topics* Book I. Las Casas insists that: "as the Philosopher says, that is said to be probable which is approved by all men, either the majority of wise men or by those whose wisdom has the greatest following" (1974, 220–221). What is this reference to Aristotle?

At the outset of the *Topics*, one of his logical treatises, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of deductions or 'syllogisms.' He calls the first type a 'demonstration'; and he calls the second type a 'dialectical' deduction. Aristotle explains the distinction in the very passage Las Casas cites:

> Now a deduction (*sullogismos*) is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them. It is a demonstration, when the premisses from which the deduction starts are true and primitive, or are such that our knowledge of them has originally come through premisses which are primitive and true; and it is a dialectical deduction, if it reasons from reputable opinions (*ex endoxôn*) (*Topics* I.1, 100a25–b18, revised Oxford translation).

Aristotle goes on to explain what he means by saying that in the case of dialectical deductions the premises are reputable opinions—the Greek word here is *endoxa* (sometimes also translated as 'probable assumptions'). Regarding such *endoxa* Aristotle says that, "those opinions are reputable which are [i] accepted by everyone or [ii] by the majority or [iii] by the wise—i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them" (*Topics* I.1, 100b20–23; cf. *NE* VII.1, 1145b2–7). This means that dialectical deductions will differ from demonstrations. For

demonstrations begin from premises that are (or are derived from premises that are) "true and primitive." That is, demonstrations begin from premises which, like each of the first principles in an Aristotelian science, "should command belief in and by itself."

By contrast, a 'dialectical' deduction will proceed from *endoxa*—it will proceed from those reputable opinions or modest human starting points which, as Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, are the only appropriate starting points in ethics (*NE* I.4, 1095a30–b4).[10] In a practical subject like ethics, the appropriate starting points are the ethical opinions that are accepted by everyone, or by the majority, or by the wise. We must start from things that are evident to *us*. Our starting points in ethics will certainly never have the epistemological firmness of premises that are 'true and primitive.' Rather, our starting points in ethics can only amount to the best ethical judgments that we and our society have managed to arrive at so far—the ethical judgments that seem most evident to us. This will be a subject that, as a historical matter, merits our ongoing ethical reflection.[11]

Las Casas's explicit recognition of Aristotle's ethical methodology—along with the way he utilizes this methodology in defense of the Aztec way of life, for instance by castigating the

[10] In Aristotelian science we presumably start from what is "better known to us," proceed to what is "better known by nature," and construct "demonstrations" of the completed science.

[11] On Aristotle's method in ethics, Kraut (2008) provides a helpful overview, noting on Aristotle's behalf that when we engage in ethical inquiry, "it is reasonable to throw into the mixture of opinions that we take seriously not only the theories of those who have spent their lives studying the subject, but also the common moral consciousness, not only of our time and place, but of other times and places as well" (80). See further the references in the subsequent note, below, and the discussions of neo-Aristotelian ethics cited there.

ethical outlook of his fellow Spaniards—indicates that Las Casas interprets Aristotle's ethics in terms of what I have characterized elsewhere as an 'internal' validation of the virtues of character.[12] An internal validation of the virtues of character disavows any 'external' appeal to a universal and morally determinative form of human nature from which one could derive a specific conception of the virtues of character. The general form of this different type of validation—an external validation of the virtues—manifests itself most obviously in interpretations of Aristotle that appeal to an alleged 'metaphysical biology' or other form of natural teleology, usually culminating in a naturalistic conception of well-being or flourishing.

By contrast, Las Casas seems to recognize that Aristotle's ethical project can be understood as significantly more modest than that. Indeed, Las Casas seems to follow Aristotle down this different philosophical path. This more modest Aristotelianism would certainly explain the sharp contrast between the charitable hermeneutical understanding deployed by Las Casas (even with respect to human sacrifice) and the quite different apology for conquest deployed by Sepúlveda—i.e., an apology for conquest that exhibits a form of willful hermeneutical ignorance, especially, but not only, in its appeal to natural slavery (cf. Pohlhaus 2012, Fricker 2016).

[12] An internal validation contrasts with an external validation, the latter of which I have characterized elsewhere as follows: "An external validation of the virtues of character is an attempt to demonstrate that possession of the virtues of character is necessary in order to secure some good, or to avoid some harm, where the good in question, or the harm, is recognizable as such independently of the particular evaluative outlook provided by possession of the virtues themselves. The validation will thus rely on resources that are 'external' to the particular evaluative outlook to be validated" (Birondo 2015, 85; 2017, 191). An internal validation of the virtues need not be philosophically trivial, as I attempt to illustrate in Birondo (2020).

4. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE NATURAL LIGHT

Las Casas also argues that it is not easy to convince even rational people to abandon their cultural heritage in a short amount of time, especially given *only* the resources provided by "natural light of reason"—that is, without the further epistemological resources that Las Casas believes are provided by "faith, grace, and doctrine." Waging war on the Aztecs would therefore be unjustified, because "it is difficult to absorb in a short time the truth proclaimed to them." Here Las Casas emphasizes that the 'natural light of reason' displays epistemological limitations—that in the absence of divine revelation, natural reason seems to provide justificatory reasons *in favor* of human sacrifice (cf. Beuchot 1998, 28–30).

In what follows I want to mention three possible strategies for supporting this second line of defense. Las Casas employs the first two strategies in the *Defense*. His avoiding the third one must have been determined by facts on the ground.

First, Las Casas appeals to biblical and historical precedents of human sacrifice that seem to illustrate its consistency with natural reason. He cites biblical episodes apparently indicating that God sometimes requires (or permits) human sacrifice. He also cites episodes of human sacrifice from Western civilizations: for instance among the Greeks, Romans, and even "our own Spaniards" (1974, 224).[13]

[13] For a helpful discussion of Las Casas's use of historical sources here, see Carman (2016, 285–288).

Second, Las Casas argues that natural reason seems even to *require* sacrificing humans to God. He proceeds by first establishing four principles (mostly by appeal to theological and philosophical authorities): (1) No nation is so barbarous that it does not have at least some confused knowledge of God; (2) People are led by natural inclination to worship God according to their capacities and in their own ways; (3) There is no better way to worship God than by sacrifice, which is the principle act of *latria* [adoration]; (4) Offering sacrifice to the true God, or to the one who is thought to be God, comes from the natural law, whereas the things to be offered to God are a matter of human law and positive legislation (1974, chap. 35). From these principles Las Casas derives the conclusion of the natural light of reason (given that no earthly thing is more valuable than human life). He writes:

> Therefore nature itself dictates and teaches those who do not have faith, grace, or doctrine, who live within the limitations of the light of nature, that, in spite of every contrary positive law, they ought to sacrifice victims to the true God or to the false god who is thought to be true, so that by offering a supremely precious thing they might be more grateful for the many favors they have received. (Las Casas 1974, 234)

A similar conclusion might also be reached by direct appeal to Christianity, as follows.

Third, Las Casas might have emphasized—something that he does indeed mention—that Christianity itself essentially involves human sacrifice (Las Casas 1974, 239; cf. Pagden 1986, 227, n. 198). Hence the activity of human sacrifice cannot, by itself, be any sign of barbarism and cannot be contrary to the natural light of reason. The charitable view would be that the

Aztecs are only partially mistaken here (in absence of divine revelation), since the sacrificial debt has already been paid in the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, as I myself would emphasize, if one takes seriously the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation—that the bread and the wine of the Eucharist are not mere representations of the body and the blood of Christ, but that they literally are the body and the blood of Christ—then Christianity also involves a form of cannibalism.

What each of these strategies demonstrates is the possibility of a radical form of hermeneutical charity even regarding the allegedly barbarous practices of the Aztec people. Gustavo Gutiérrez nicely summarizes this in his magisterial study of Las Casas. Gutiérrez writes:

> By attending to the customs, lifestyles, and religious freedom of the Indians, [Las Casas] created the necessary conditions for a dialogue to be conducted in respect for both parties. In this manner of dialogue, reason, not undue pressure, makes possible an integral presentation of the gospel message: now that message is offered—without prejudice to the values of the one proclaiming it—for the free acceptance of each hearer.

Such a dialogue will respect the rational freedom of both parties. It will also involve, not only the giving of reasons, but also the taking of them:

> If evangelization is a dialogue, it will not exist without an effort to understand the position of one's interlocutor from within, in such a way that one may sense the vital

> thrust of these positions and grasp their internal logic. Neither will it be possible unless one is ready to give *as well as to receive*.[14]

This passage characterizes the dialogical approach to ethics that I am urging (but without any appeal to the supernatural). Although we should certainly be wary, in intercultural contexts, of any appeal to 'evangelization,' Las Casas's radical hermeneutical charity advances the discussion here.[15] Las Casas demonstrates the central virtue involved in a philosophical version of mestizaje: a radical hermeneutical charity that constitutes a distinctive form of epistemic justice. This epistemic virtue disavows an epistemology of ignorance by recognizing and—where appropriate—encouraging philosophical admixture. This philosophical admixture will occur, in my view, in at least the following two ways. First, it will occur across spatio-cultural geography and between different philosophical, cultural, and academic communities. This is a kind of cross-pollination—something that seems to be more often lauded than practiced. Second, it will occur across world-historical time, as a result of one's own historical (i.e. 'genetic') philosophical

[14] Gutiérrez (1993, 188–189, my emphasis). Gutiérrez finds a similar hermeneutical charity in the work, much later, of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (b. 1648): see Gutiérrez (1993, 525, n. 69). On the importance of taking as well as giving reasons in intercultural contexts, see Birondo (2017), to which the current paper is a kind of late addendum.

[15] This seems to be the context in which to understand Alcoff's claim that in contrast to a Cartesian form of self-understanding, Las Casas is "groping toward a different self-understanding, in which one's own inclinations are analyzed in relation to their social context" (2017, 405). She immediately adds something that could be helpful for contemporary philosophers: "Within this approach, dialogic models of philosophical thought, especially those that can span cultures and belief systems, are non-negotiable necessities for the development of understanding." Castro (2007) and von Vacano (2012) reach rather harsher verdicts on Las Casas's evangelism. But neither author seems to me adequately to address Gutiérrez's painstaking case for the claim that a "single idea" governs Las Casas's *Apología*: "respect for the Indians' religious customs" (1993, 174).

inheritance, an inheritance that shapes one's overall philosophical outlook, one's framework of thought. This is a kind of dialogue with the past.[16] In the final section I gesture toward a more rounded view of each of these.

5. EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN ARISTOTELIAN ETHICS

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle restricts the audience of his ethical lectures on the grounds that those who engage in moral philosophy must have been well brought up or brought up in good habits (*NE* I.4, 1095b4–6). What is less frequently noticed is that this requirement—to have appropriate ethical starting points and to have a character sufficiently well formed that one is not swayed by, for instance, unruly desires (*NE* I.3, 1095a4–6)—is also one that applies to Aristotle himself, and to Aristotelian moral philosophers in general, since they are also engaged in the practice of moral philosophy. But in the aftermath of the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán and other parts of the Americas, Aristotelian moral philosophy did not generally embrace the

[16] Beuchot (2005) helpfully argues for the type of anti-presentism that I mention here. He argues that contemporary Mexican philosophers can benefit from a neo-Aristotelian outlook that appreciates the influence of cultural-historical tradition—he cites the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Hans-Georg Gadamer (127). Beuchot reasonably asks: "If it is true that we live within a tradition, how can we advance in it or even oppose it if we do not have at least a minimum knowledge of it?" (114). The right hermeneutical balance can nevertheless be, in any specific context, difficult to strike: see O'Gorman (2017 [1960]) on understanding Aztec archeological artifacts, specifically the magnificent statue of Coatlicue in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

dialogical approach advocated by Las Casas. I believe we need to trace the history of the damage done to moral philosophy in the long historical interim.[17]

By way of analogy, consider an episode of European barbarism, recorded from the perspective of Aztec witnesses immediately before the fall of Mexico. In this episode, Spanish soldiers block the exits during a festive religious gathering, allowing the soldiers to massacre the participants. This gruesome episode seems to be taking inspiration from something in Homer and giving inspiration to something in George R. R. Martin—except that this actual historical episode involves gross violations of human dignity:

> And when they had closed them off … they then entered the temple courtyard to slay them … they surrounded those who danced whereupon they went among the drums. Then they struck the arms of the one who beat the drums; they severed both his hands, and afterwards struck his neck, [so that] his neck [and head] flew off, falling far away. ... Of some, they struck the belly, and their entrails streamed forth. And when one in vain would run, he would only drag his entrails like something raw, as he tried to flee. …
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> And the blood of the chieftains ran like water; it spread out slippery, and a foul odor rose from the blood. And the entrails lay as if dragged out. And the Spaniards walked everywhere, searching the tribal temples; they went making thrusts everywhere in case

[17] The valuable collection of essays in Miller (2017) provides a good beginning here—it considers the historical reception of Aristotle's ethics—except that there is no consideration of the European encounter with the Americas or the Latin American world. A valuable corrective can be found in Aspe (2018).

someone were hidden there. Everywhere they went, ransacking every tribal temple they hunted.[18]

Ultimately it is unclear whether Anglo-American moral philosophy has displayed an understanding of cultural others that has been *much* better than the understanding displayed in this historical episode. Whether intentionally or not, mainstream Anglo-American philosophy has been remarkably effective at securing its borders against what many of its practitioners consider to be alien influences. This includes influences from other cultures and from demographics other than the dominantly situated demographic in the profession; from other academic disciplines (for instance history, sociology, and anthropology, although this is improving in some quarters); and from philosophical methodologies other than the methodologies developed within Anglo-American philosophy in the early- and mid-twentieth century and still insisted upon by some philosophers today as the defining mark of any genuine philosophy. Indeed, some philosophers seem to be eerily at home with the history of Western imperialism. This is a history that such philosophers seem to think can be neatly left in the past, in such a way that they—and their favored research projects—can continue to benefit from centuries of past injustice.

Obviously I cannot fully develop these suggestions here.[19] Instead of doing so, I will emphasize something that I think is utterly crucial for developing a plausible neo-Aristotelian ethics

[18] *Florentine Codex* 12.20, 53–54.

[19] The historiographical study in Park (2013) and the work of Robert Bernasconi, Walter Mignolo, and Charles Mills (among others) have helpfully gotten the discussion going, as have recent attempts to generate 'new histories of philosophy'—but see also Allais (2016) and Ameriks (forthcoming) for

informed by an intercultural perspective. This is a radical form of cultural self-scrutiny, especially a scrutiny of the ethical and epistemic prejudices that are embedded within our social-historical framework of thought—a framework of thought that is of course usually taken for granted. It ceases to be taken for granted—or *can* do so—when it comes into contact with radically alternative frameworks, ones that are culturally or historically distant from our own current location. To put the point differently: contemporary moral philosophers need to pay greater attention to history in at least two senses. We need a better understanding of the history and the historicity of philosophy, an understanding of the former that is not willfully inaccurate and that disavows the arrogance of knowing only one's own philosophical tradition.[20] We also need a better appreciation of our current place in history and our cultural particularity—a critical understanding of the framework of thought that can of course seem inevitable to us. This would be a form of neo-Aristotelian ethics that takes seriously those genealogical approaches that still remain *very* much against-the-current in contemporary moral philosophy. It would also be a form of Aristotelian ethics that, in better appreciating our current (globalized, multicultural, postcolonial/neo-colonial) place in history, strains to embody the virtues of epistemic justice.

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helpfully more sympathetic views of the late eighteenth century and Kant in particular. Recent work on Aztec ethics and Aristotle (Purcell 2017) and Aztec metaphysics (Maffie 2014) illustrates another type of void waiting to be filled.

[20] Latin American philosophy provides an epistemological opportunity for Anglo-American philosophy: to scrutinize its own historical development from the radically alternative perspective of world-historical marginality. This theme in Latin American thought—the theme of marginality—has been especially emphasized in the work of Leopoldo Zea, Enrique Dussel, and Walter Mignolo. See for instance Zea (1992 [1957]), Dussel (1995), Mignolo (2000); see also Alcoff (2017), Schutte (1993). On the dangers that can prevent dominantly situated groups from taking advantage of such epistemological opportunities, see Mills (2007), Pohlhaus (2012), Fricker (2016).

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