

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY

FOUNDED IN 1964

AMERICAN
Volume

NICHOLAS RESCHER, *Editor*

DOROTHY HENLE, *Operations Manager*

Issued with the advice and assistance of the Board of Editorial Consultants:

Virgil C. Aldrich
Robert Almeder
Philip Clayton
Antonio S. Cua
Marcia Eaton
Robert Fogelin
Bernard Gert
Alan Goldman
Robert Gordon

Paul Humphreys
Gary Iseminger
Oliver Johnson
John Kekes
Joel Kupperman
John Lachs
Donald Livingston
William Lycan
Joseph Margolis
Norman Melchert

Paul Moser
Steve Sapontzis
Brian Skyrms
Roy Sorensen
Marshall W. Swain
Carl G. Vaught
Douglas Walton
Patricia Werhane
Kathleen Wright

Contents for Volume 29/Number 4 (October 1992)

Alex Rosenberg: <i>Causation, Probability, and the Monarchy</i>	305
Raymond Martin: <i>Self-Interest and Survival</i>	319
James Montmarquet: <i>Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility</i>	331
Maxine Sheets-Johnstone: <i>Taking Evolution Seriously</i>	343
Martin Schönfeld: <i>Who or What Has Moral Standing?</i>	353
Steven G. Smith: <i>Realizing</i>	363
Vicente Medina: <i>The Possibility of an Indigenous Philosophy: A Latin American Perspective</i>	373
Douglas Walton: <i>Nonfallacious Arguments from Ignorance</i>	381
<i>The Editor's Page</i>	389
<i>Books Received</i>	391

THE
Hume:
damen
structu
sation,
out to
Iror
Russel
wrong
gone a
In ma
self to
analys
in fact
depen
presse
claims
the tu
while
claim
philos
word
assoc
sion t
sirabl
out to
after
most
proba
Hume
sation
does r
notior
that it
It is
basica

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY: A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE¹

Vicente Medina

I

THE controversy over the possibility of an indigenous "Latin American philosophy"² deals with an older question about the nature of philosophy itself: Is the nature of philosophy purely speculative, practical, or both? In exploring this question I shall refer to a controversy, as Ernest Sosa explains it, between "serious philosophy" and "free-spirited philosophy."³ This is part of a broader and perennial controversy between *universalism*, on the one hand, and *historicism* on the other. Universalism or serious philosophy, as Sosa contends, corresponds to the Platonic tradition that postulates the existence of extra-mental realities that are accessible to reasonable persons and exist regardless of whether we conceive of them.⁴ From this point of view the balkanization of philosophy is simply inconceivable or just a plain category mistake.

On the contrary, "historicists" or "free-spirited philosophers" reject the "serious philosopher's view" and argue that philosophers, as spatio-temporal individuals in a particular historical context, are bound by their own experiences. These experiences condition their world view to the extent to which a philosopher may, in principle, never transcend his or her historical milieu.⁵

There are clear fundamental differences between serious and free-spirited philosophers dealing with the nature of both *epistemic justification* and the metaphysical notion of *truth*. For example truth, according to the first, is value-free, noncontextual and hence universal, whereas for the latter, truth is value-laden, contextual and hence perspectival.⁶

The term "Latin American philosophy" may be used in several different senses.⁷ But I am using it, for the sake of argument, in a normative sense⁸ as referring to social and political philosophy written by Latin Americans to change those "oppressive"⁹ conditions and policies that are present in Latin American societies (we may classify liberation philosophers or liberationists in this category).¹⁰ Liberationists seem to argue that the nature of philosophical inquiry is such that, in order to do genuine or authentic philosophy, one must be committed to the goal of "liberation" (regardless of the contestability and ambiguity of this term).¹¹ Thus the question over a Latin American philosophy may be understood as a controversy between those who argue, in the spirit of liberation, that in order to do authentic or genuine philosophy one must be "committed"¹² to the goal of liberation; and those who argue, in the spirit of serious philosophy, that to do genuine or authentic philosophy one must pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake.

One may argue, contra liberationists, that serious or universalist philosophers can present illuminating and hence persuasive arguments for their serious position. Yet liberationists may contend that I am guilty of begging the question. However, it seems to me that if they could successfully demonstrate that I am in fact guilty of doing so, they would be compelled to appeal at least to some nonarbitrary principle of adjudication in order to establish their point. But if this were to be the case, then they would actually be supporting, instead of undermining, my argument in favor of a version of serious philosophy. Thus liberationists seem to be faced

with a dilemma. Either they abide by the principles of sound reasoning in order to show that I am guilty of begging the question and, therefore, provide ammunition for my argument against their free-spirited position. Or they give up the principles of sound reasoning and, therefore, give up the notion of reasonable argumentation altogether.

One may partly understand by the nature of philosophical inquiry the activity of being critical and thus argumentative. This means that philosophers present arguments and defend them with reasons. These reasons are universally open to inspection to anyone who wants to assess them. Both reasons and arguments may be assessed according to the principles of sound reasoning: coherence, clarity, and the weight of evidence. This, however, does not mean that philosophy is a science. On the contrary, it means that philosophy, in the serious universalist tradition, is a way of assessing, elucidating and questioning unfounded beliefs and values. Philosophy, among other things, may be understood as a cosmopolitan critical activity regulated by the principles of sound reasoning that might but need not be attached to some specific geographic region and therefore to a specific culture.

On the contrary, some liberationists seem to be suggesting that a Latin American philosophy is conceivable if there is in fact a distinct Latin American culture which supervenes upon indigenous problems. Moreover these indigenous problems, liberationists contend, condition the identity of the philosophy (or perhaps philosophies) that issues from such cultural enclaves.¹³ This is a dubious claim.¹⁴

Even though the concept of culture is open-ended, it is necessarily restricted to a particular region and, roughly speaking, to a specific way of life. On the contrary, the concept of philosophy, even though more strictly bound by the laws of reasoning and cogent argumentation, is not necessarily restricted to a particular region nor to a specific way of life.

Nonetheless, the concept of philosophy is also open-ended, but there seems to be a core of principles that resist rejection. For example, the laws of logic,¹⁵ the necessarily true proposition that the whole is greater than its parts, the necessarily false proposi-

tion that there is a square-circle; in short, all propositional claims used to operate with the metaphysical notions of necessity, possibility, and contingency together with the notions of implication and presupposition.¹⁶ Moreover the moral principle that we ought not to inflict unmerited suffering on innocent persons, Aquinas's first precept of law: "good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided,"¹⁷ the legal principle that we ought to punish the guilty rather than the innocent, are universal and therefore transcultural objective principles that any reasonable person may recognize to be *true*¹⁸ regardless of his or her different cultural backgrounds.

It seems plausible to conceive of the idea of philosophy separately from the idea of culture, since one may understand many philosophical problems without reference to particular cultures. For example, consider Plato's theory of the state, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, and Descartes's theory of knowledge. I do not have a problem understanding what I consider to be some of Plato's arguments without reference to his cultural environment. But I will agree that having a better understanding of Plato's way of life and Athenian society in general may enrich my understanding of Plato's personality, and perhaps even explain why he chose to develop his theory of the state the way he did. Yet this is a matter of psychological and historical speculation. Nothing philosophically interesting follows from this. We may never be certain, from a psychological or historical perspective, why Plato developed his theory of the state the way he did. But it is conceivable and hence plausible that any person may, by reading some of Plato's dialogues, come to an understanding of his theory of the state. True! there is still room for disagreement about what Plato *really* meant by his theory of the state (or even question whether he ever held one). This, however, does not exclude the possibility that one may acquire a sufficiently clear understanding of Plato's ideas and arguments, so that one may talk and reasonably argue about them without any in depth understanding of Athenian culture.¹⁹

If the idea of philosophy may be understood separately from the idea of culture,²⁰

then one can comfortably accept, and in fact most people do, the existence of a Latin American culture: a way of life and the recognition of some common characteristics that differentiate Latin American people from the rest of the world.²¹ Yet despite these similarities one can simultaneously argue, as serious philosophers probably would, that the idea of an indigenous Latin American philosophy, in a substantive sense, is either a category mistake, an ideological belief (a false belief or one accepted without sufficient justification), or just a forecast for the future.²²

II

The controversy over an indigenous Latin American philosophy is not only one between "serious philosophy" and "free-spirited philosophy," but one between philosophy as a moral attitude or world view and philosophy as a rigorous methodology. As Fernando Salmerón contends, philosophy as a "moral attitude" refers to a subjective understanding of reality by which a philosopher tries to persuade others how this reality "ought" to be interpreted. On the contrary, when we refer to philosophy as a "rigorous methodology" we try to maintain the distance between ourselves and the object of cognition.²³ The purpose of philosophy, in this strict sense, is to evaluate arguments and reasons according to the principles of sound reasoning and to try to get away as much as possible from our subjective preferences.

Liberationists try to blur the distinction between philosophy as a *moral attitude* and philosophy as a *rigorous methodology*. One may even sympathize with some of their goals and simultaneously deny (1) that there is anything philosophical about this, and (2) that we need a new way of doing philosophy to achieve these goals. One may argue, for example, about the need to overcome economic underdevelopment, social and political injustices, and the desirability of establishing not only political, but also economic democracy. This, however, is a matter of *moral sensibility*, rather than a matter of philosophical reflection. What really is philosophical about this is that all of the previously mentioned goals are competing with

one another. Thus it is not clear which one of them takes precedence over the others. At this point, philosophical arguments are important to show for example, whether democracy should apply only to the political realm or to both political and economic realms; or whether economic development should take precedence over political liberty; or whether our obligation to obey the state and its institutions is simply absolute or should be conditioned on the moral quality of such institutions.²⁴

Apparently, liberationists contend that all philosophy is essentially *ideological*.²⁵ However, it is not ideological in the sense that philosophy deals with "ideas" and different methodologies to interpret and thereby restructure reality, but in the sense that philosophical inquiry is context-dependent and hence perspectival. By this they mean that concepts such as those of "reason" and "truth" are relative to a particular framework of reference and hence a particular way of life. If this is the case, then the supposed cosmopolitan nature of philosophy is nothing more than a myth that, according to liberationists, should be replaced by a new myth, namely their own.

Have liberationists managed to present good arguments for their position? I do not think so. How are they going to explain, for example, the principles of logic, the ontological status of numbers, the principles of sound reasoning? In short, if all philosophy is essentially context-dependent, then how are we going to assess different philosophical arguments and reasons? Would Latin American philosophers have their own "private language"? And this would apply to African philosophers,²⁶ Asian philosophers, and Western philosophers in general. Doesn't it sound more reasonable to say, as serious philosophers contend, that there seems to be a minimum core of principles that may be universally applicable? Why would a Latin American philosophy, if there is such a thing, be preferable to an Anglo-American tradition of philosophy? To answer that its preferability depends on being "ours" is simply arbitrary and hence chauvinistic.²⁷ On the other hand, to answer that Latin American philosophy is objectively better or prefera-

ble to any other way of doing philosophy is to be committed to a set of criteria by which one could assess different philosophical arguments and reasons.

The question of whether there is an indigenous Latin American philosophy has important implications. First, if the idea of a Latin American philosophy is understood in the ordinary sense, one may say that there is indeed a substantial body of literature discussing this question. This may be legitimately called Latin American philosophy. But nothing philosophically interesting follows from this fact that no one denies.

Second, if one wants to argue, as some liberationists do, that there is indeed a Latin American philosophy of liberation in a substantive sense, then they are in fact arguing that "serious philosophy" or philosophy understood as "rigorous methodology" must be abandoned. In short, liberationists are proposing a *paradigm shift* in philosophy.²⁸ Yet this shift need not in fact be warranted. First, if there is no such a thing as *serious philosophy* and we only have different competing moral attitudes or world views, then it is not clear what criteria, if any, we are going to use to adopt one world view rather than another.²⁹ Second, if we want to establish, as some liberationists do, that genuine or authentic philosophy "*ought*" to be committed to a particular world view—their world view, then this is a value judgment and must be defended as such. They need to appeal to some nonarbitrary criteria to persuade us that they are right. I do not see these reasons forthcoming. Moreover, their position appears to be incoherent; they seem to deny the possibility of any universal principle to adjudicate disputed arguments and also argue that their position is objectively right or morally desirable.³⁰

Liberationists might appeal to the desirability of liberation as an end in itself. That is to say, anything that contributes to the liberation of actual or prospective moral agents is desirable and, by the same token, anything that goes against it undesirable. However, the concept of "liberation," like any other important moral concept, is contestable.³¹ For example, most of us agree that "liberty" is desirable. Yet we need not all agree to the

meaning of "liberty." Are we talking about "negative liberty" or the absence of coercion? Or are we talking about "positive liberty" or the capacity to do or achieve something? Each one of these concepts of liberty implies a different set of values, and it is not clear to me that one or a set of these values always takes precedence over the other.³² Moreover liberationists do not realize that, as Francisco Miró Quesada argues, if the "only" purpose of philosophy is simply to be a *means* for liberation (regardless of how one interprets this term), then the justification of liberation is beyond the realm of philosophy and therefore beyond the realm of rational discourse. Consequently, as Miró Quesada contends, the struggle for liberation "*se reduce a una mera lucha de fuerzas*"³³ is ultimately reduced to a mere power struggle.

It seems that liberationists are committed to the unfounded view that to do genuine or authentic philosophy one ought to be morally committed to change unjust or unfair situations; otherwise one is not doing authentic philosophy.³⁴ Thus let us assume, for the sake of argument, that Wittgenstein had been born in a Latin American country rather than in a European country. Let us also assume that he is presently alive and writing philosophy somewhere in this country where there is a clear unjust situation. Let us also assume that our Latin American Wittgenstein is indifferent to this situation and, furthermore, he has written all his philosophical works under these conditions of injustice.³⁵ According to liberationists, Wittgenstein's philosophy would not be genuine or authentic philosophy because, in our hypothetical case, our Latin American Wittgenstein never wrote philosophy to help bring about social and political justice. Does it follow from this that our hypothetical Wittgenstein's philosophy is not genuine or authentic philosophy? Of course not! Wittgenstein's philosophy is genuine and, therefore, good philosophy because it contributes to our understanding of many philosophical issues from an ingenious and hence original perspective. The point is that our hypothetical Wittgenstein's philosophy and his moral attitudes or world views are two different things and each must be assessed on its own merit.

I
has
the
ity
ing
sor
ally
the
ter
ref
tio
an
a d
of
pla
pri
cas

Set

1. I
E. I
crit
Arr
Me
in s
2. I
the
phi
Arr
3. S
on
So:
bo:
"fr
un:
cor
4. S
p. 7
Arr
14
Phi
5. S
6. S
Sal:
"fr
Ro

If the term "Latin American philosophy" has any clear reference at all, it may refer to the body of literature discussing the possibility of such a philosophy. This is an uninteresting fact that no one will deny. It may refer to some unique features that are either generally true or only true of Latin America, but the challenge to this view is precisely to determine those unique conditions.³⁶ Or it may refer to the so called "philosophy of liberation." Yet I have tried to point out that this is an ideological (unfounded belief) and hence a defective way of understanding the nature of philosophy, since it cannot adequately explain certain universal principles, such as the principles of sound reasoning. If this is the case, then to uphold the desirability of such a

philosophy will be incoherent. Therefore, the foundations of a Latin American philosophy of liberation seem, to say the least, questionable.

However, from this it does not follow that many of the goals advocated by liberationists are not morally worthy. On the contrary, many of their goals are desirable, such as the goals of liberation from injustices, from economic underdevelopment, and from poverty and illiteracy. Philosophy as "serious philosophy" and as "rigorous methodology" can help to bring about many of these goals by presenting sound and strong arguments for their realization and by unmasking false beliefs and unfounded values that support both oppressive policies and structures.³⁷

Seton Hall University

Received October 4, 1991

NOTES

1. I must thank Ernest Sosa, David Benfield, Ramon M. Lemos, Kenneth Aman, Judith Rae Davis, Felix E. Martín, Ana Sierra, and my colleague David O'Connor for their valuable comments and constructive criticisms. A version of this paper was presented at the meeting of the Society for Iberian and Latin American Thought (SILAT) at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division 87th Annual Meeting of December 1990, in Boston. I benefitted from many comments provided by the participants in such a meeting.
2. I understand the term "Latin American" (as well as "Hispanic American" or "Ibero-American") in the expression "Latin American philosophy" or "Hispanic American philosophy" or "Ibero-American philosophy" as referring to both the geographic as well as to the cultural enclaves of Central, South America, and the Caribbean.
3. Someone may object that I am in fact forcing Sosa's distinction of serious and free-spirited philosophy on a different debate about the nature of an indigenous philosophy of liberation. Nonetheless, I think Sosa's distinction is pertinent, since the controversy between universalism and historicism cuts across both debates. Moreover, it is important to note that I, like Sosa, am using the terms "serious" and "free-spirited" philosophy as descriptive rather than as value-laden terms. So for those who are still uncomfortable with the serious and free-spirited distinction I recommend they substitute for it a less controversial one between "noncontextual" and "contextual" philosophy.
4. See Ernest Sosa, "Serious Philosophy and Freedom of Spirit," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 84 (1987), p. 708. Also for the distinction between "universalism" and "historicism" in the controversy over a Latin American philosophy, see Oscar Martí, "Is There a Latin American Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 14 (1983), pp. 46-52; see Ofelia Schutte, "Toward an Understanding of Latin American Philosophy," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 31, (no. 1/4, 1987), pp. 21-34.
5. See Sosa, p. 710.
6. Some Latin American philosophers who defend versions of "serious philosophy" are Fernando Salmerón, Luis Villoro, and Francisco Miró Quesada among others. Those who defend versions of "free-spirited philosophy" are Leopoldo Zea, Augusto Salazar Bondy, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Andrés Roig, and Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg among others. See Fernando Salmeron, "La filosofía y las actitudes

morales," in *El Análisis Filosófico en América Latina*, eds. Jorge J. E. Gracia, Eduardo Rabossi, Enrique Villanueva, Marcelo Dascal (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985), pp. 265-92; Luis Villoro, "Sobre el Problema de la Filosofía en Latinoamérica," *Cuadernos Americanos*, vol. 3 (Mayo-Junio de 1987), pp. 86-104; Francisco Miró Quesada, *Despertar y Proyecto del Filosofar Latinoamericano* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1974) and "Función Actual de la Filosofía en América Latina," *Revista de Filosofía Latinoamericana*, Tomo 1, No. 2 (Julio-Diciembre de 1975), pp. 199-208. See Leopoldo Zea, "Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem," *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 20, (no. 1-2, Fall-Winter 1988-89), pp. 33-42, also "Essays on Philosophy in History," in *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986), pp. 219-30 and *Dependencia y Liberación en la Cultura Latinoamericana* (Mexico: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1974); Augusto Salazar Bondy, "The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought," in *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 233-44, also *¿Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1968); Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. by Aquilina Martínez and Christine Morkovsky (New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Arturo Andrés Roig, "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America," in *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 247-59; Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, "Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy for Liberation," *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 20 (no. 1-2, Fall-Winter 1988-89), pp. 43-61.

7. The term "Latin American philosophy" may be used both in an *ordinary sense* and in a *substantive sense*. In an ordinary sense it may refer to (1) philosophy of any sort done by Latin Americans in Latin America regardless of the nature of the issues in question, (2) philosophy done by any other philosopher regardless of his or her nationality about Latin American problems, (3) philosophy done by any philosopher regardless of his or her nationality about Latin American philosophers, (4) the body of literature discussing the possibility and development of a Latin American philosophy, or (5) the body of literature discussing the nature of a Latin American philosophy of liberation. Moreover, the substantive sense may be interpreted in either a *metaphysical* or a *normative* sense. The metaphysical may refer to philosophy which is true only of Latin America regardless of where or by whom it is practiced. The normative, however, may refer to (1) social and political philosophy written by anyone regardless of his or her nationality with the intent to change those oppressive conditions that are present in Latin American societies, or (2) social and political philosophy written by Latin Americans with the intent to change oppressive conditions wherever they obtain.

8. For an interesting exchange about the normative nature of philosophy, see the plenary address to the Eleventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy in Guadalajara, Mexico, 1985 delivered by Richard Rorty, "From Logic to Language to Play," *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association*, vol. 59 (1986), pp. 747-53. See the debate generated by Rorty's paper and other North American philosophers about the problem of "cultural imperialism" in this same issue of *Proceedings*. See Thomas Auxter, "The Debate over Cultural Imperialism," *Proceedings*, pp. 753-57. See Ofelia Schutte, "Notes on the Issue of Cultural Imperialism," *Proceedings*, pp. 757-59. See also Leopoldo Zea's letter to Konstantin Kolenda in reference to the Eleventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy, "Letters to the Editor," *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association*, vol. 60 (1987), pp. 516-19. In this same issue of *Proceedings*, see the defense of Rorty's position and the intrinsic value of philosophical discourse presented by Virginia Black, "Letters to the Editor," pp. 517-22.

9. "Oppression" is a vague and therefore contestable term that needs to be defined in the context in which it is used. The fact we call an act or a set of conditions oppressive is not sufficient to understand what one means by this term. We need to give an account of what constitute oppression and why this condition is morally undesirable.

10. For an interesting taxonomy on different kinds of "philosophy for liberation," see Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, "Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy for Liberation," pp. 43-61.

11. Even if one recognizes that there is an important moral obligation to prevent and, to the extent to which we are able, to help in the transformation of unjust social and political structures, it does not follow that in order to do "authentic philosophy" one must recognize this obligation. The point is that it is possible for one to be both a despicable person and an original or "authentic" philosopher. For example, one could be an "authentic" epistemologist or an "authentic" metaphysician and simultaneously be a morally corrupt person.

12. For E. Gracia
Fall-Winter
13. See
Actual
14. For
that Zea
Identity
15. At k
false sin
of exclu
16. See
17. See
The Me
18. It is i
property
and argu
as a me
interest
The Tan
19. Som
underst
Howeve
be able t
the same
it. This t
language
not be a
obvious
necessar
20. Ever
follow th
21. The
experien
independ
currentl
22. For
Bondy,
23. See
Filosófi
24. For
book, So
25. See A
Cerutti-G
26. For
philosop
pp. 161-7
27. See I
for Liber
28. For
Philosop

12. For the distinction between "committed" and noncommitted or "academic" philosophy see Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Introduction: Latin American Philosophy Today," *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 20, 1-2, Fall-Winter 1988-89, pp. 22-24.
13. See Leopoldo Zea, "Essays on Philosophy in History," p. 220. See also Arturo Andrés Roig, "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America," p. 257.
14. For an interesting argument against the controversial relationship between "culture" and "philosophy" that Zea and others have expounded, see Jorge J. E. Gracia and Ivan Jaksic, "The Problem of Philosophical Identity in Latin America," *InterAmerican Review of Bibliography*, vol. 34 (1984), pp. 63-64.
15. At least the first two laws which are (1) the law of noncontradiction: a statement cannot be true and false simultaneously, and (2) the law of identity: everything is identical to itself. The third one, the law of excluded middle (a statement must be either true or false), is to some extent controversial.
16. See Ernest Sosa, pp. 722-23.
17. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, edited by Anton Pegis (New York: The Modern Library, 1948), p. 637.
18. It is important to note that I call all of these principles true not because they possess some metaphysical property called "truth," but because they are "objective" principles that may be defended with reasons and arguments regardless of one's cultural or historical perspective. Moreover, whether there is such a thing as a metaphysical property called "truth" is a further question beyond the scope of this paper. For an interesting defense of objectivity, see Thomas Nagel, "The Limits of Objectivity," in Sterling McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980), pp. 77-139.
19. Someone may object that I am not being fair to free-spirited philosophers, since the reason why I understand Plato's theory of the state is precisely because I am part, like Plato, of Western culture. However, someone from an Indian tribe in North or South America would not, the free-spirit objection goes, be able to understand Plato's theory because they are coming from a different cultural tradition. But this is the same as arguing that if some Martians were faced with Plato's theory they would not be able to understand it. This type of reasoning does not establish anything important. It simply says that if one does not know the language or does not share some common ground in terms of cultural or historical experiences, one would not be able to understand and hence assess the arguments in question. But this is obviously true. What is not obviously true is to argue, as some free-spirits do, that the rules of cogent and reasonable argumentation are necessarily context-dependent and therefore parasitic upon a specific cultural perspective.
20. Even though the idea of philosophy actually emerges from a specific cultural enclave it does not follow that the nature of this idea is necessarily restricted to such a perspective.
21. These common characteristics are, roughly speaking, a relatively similar language, similar historical experiences in virtue of the process of colonization by European powers and the subsequent struggle for independence, and the substantial influence of Catholicism that, at one point or another, permeated and currently permeates the socioeconomic and political structures of most Latin American countries.
22. For the possibility of a Latin American philosophy as a forecast for the future, see Augusto Salazar Bondy, *¿Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?*
23. See Jorge J. E. Gracia, Eduardo Rabossi, Enrique Villanueva, Marcelo Dascal, eds., *El Análisis Filosófico en América Latina* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985), pp. 281-82.
24. For a discussion about the nature of political obligation and the moral foundation of the state, see my book, *Social Contract Theories: Political Obligation or ANARCHY?* (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990).
25. See Arturo Andrés Roig, "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America," p. 250. See also Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, "Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy for Liberation," p. 44.
26. For an interesting and illuminating discussion about the possibility of an indigenous African philosophy, see Peter O. Bodunrin, "The Question of African Philosophy," *Philosophy*, vol. 56 (1981), pp. 161-79, and G. S. Sogolo, "Options in African Philosophy," *Philosophy*, vol. 65 (1990), pp. 52.
27. See Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg, "Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy for Liberation," p. 44.
28. For an illuminating example of this view, see Arturo Andrés Roig, "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America," pp. 247-59.

29. My colleague David O'Connor have perceptively suggested to me that perhaps liberationists may appeal to "pragmatic" criteria to justify adopting a specific world view rather than others. This point is well taken, but I would like to add two things: (1) one needs to be clear about the meaning of these pragmatic criteria, and furthermore (2) even assuming that these criteria are available, one needs to acknowledge that the acceptability or desirability of such criteria is justified by appealing to some universal principle(s) rather than to some indigenous one.

30. If all philosophy is purely ideological and therefore perspectival in nature, then the idea of "objective" transcultural values that may be discovered by any reasonable person is, according to liberationists, incoherent. If this is the case, then the nature of philosophy is simply reduced to tribalism and hence to a struggle for power (presumably political power). And since, according to liberationists, there are no nonarbitrary (objective) criteria to assess the moral desirability for exercising this power, it follows that they seem to be embracing the old dictum that *might makes right*. If this is so, then the power of the fascist is as good as the power of a liberal democrat, as good as the power of a communist, and as good as the power of a religious fanatic. For a defense of value nihilism, see Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 150-221.

31. What do we mean by "liberation"? Who is going to be liberated and from what conditions? And "liberation" to do or to be what? Moreover, the concept of liberation implies that there is at least one or perhaps several liberators. Who are these liberators?

32. For a classic defense of value pluralism and tolerance, see Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-72.

33. For an illuminating discussion of this problem, see Francisco Miró Quesada, "Función Actual de la Filosofía en América Latina," p. 200.

34. Perhaps the term "authentic philosophy" should be understood not as referring to a moral obligation to change unjust states of affairs, but rather as a way of thinking. To do "authentic philosophy" is to be able to express one's ideas free and critically. That is to say, to be able to challenge ideological discourse (a discourse accepted without sufficient justification) including one's own. Therefore in philosophy there are no "sacred cows." We ought to accept only those principles that may be defended by appealing to reasons and sound arguments. Thus "authenticity," as Luis Villoro contends, should be understood as "autonomy of reason." From this it follows that freedom of speech and thought are necessary although not sufficient for doing "authentic philosophy." See Villoro, pp. 91-92.

35. Although it is clear from some of his writings that Wittgenstein had a deep moral sensibility, it is also true that he never wrote much on social and political issues. Perhaps one could even speculate that if he had indeed been born in Latin America rather than in Europe he would have been a different person and hence a different philosopher. But this is beside the point of my argument. What I am trying to establish with this example is the "obvious" fact that good philosophy is not necessarily related to a good moral character nor to commendable social and political behavior.

36. But even if one were able to isolate those problems or conditions, I would still argue that, in order to address them, one must accept the validity of some universal principles such as the principles of sound reasoning. Otherwise the interpretation and exposition of these indigenous problems or conditions would be more ideological than philosophical in nature. In light of this, I agree with the comments of my ex-colleague Judith Rae Davis who claimed that my argument in this paper could be construed as an argument against "feminist" philosophy. But this is the case only if one construes feminist philosophy as the so-called "feminist epistemology" or "feminist logic." However, if one understands "feminist philosophy" as essentially a political philosophy that deals with the exploitation and hence unfair treatment of women in society, then my argument will support rather than undermine it.

37. "Oppressive policies and structures" may be roughly characterized as those policies and structures that constraint individual liberty by preventing citizens from having a *fair* access to political and socio-economic goods.

THE
tionally
is growi
ment ca
This rais
ful or go
this pap
represent
norantia
they are
particul
in dialog

The f
rance (a
ing to C
mistake
gued the
basis tha
it is fals
true." B
It has t
(1978) t
are som
Copi
ple that
is not.

Case 1