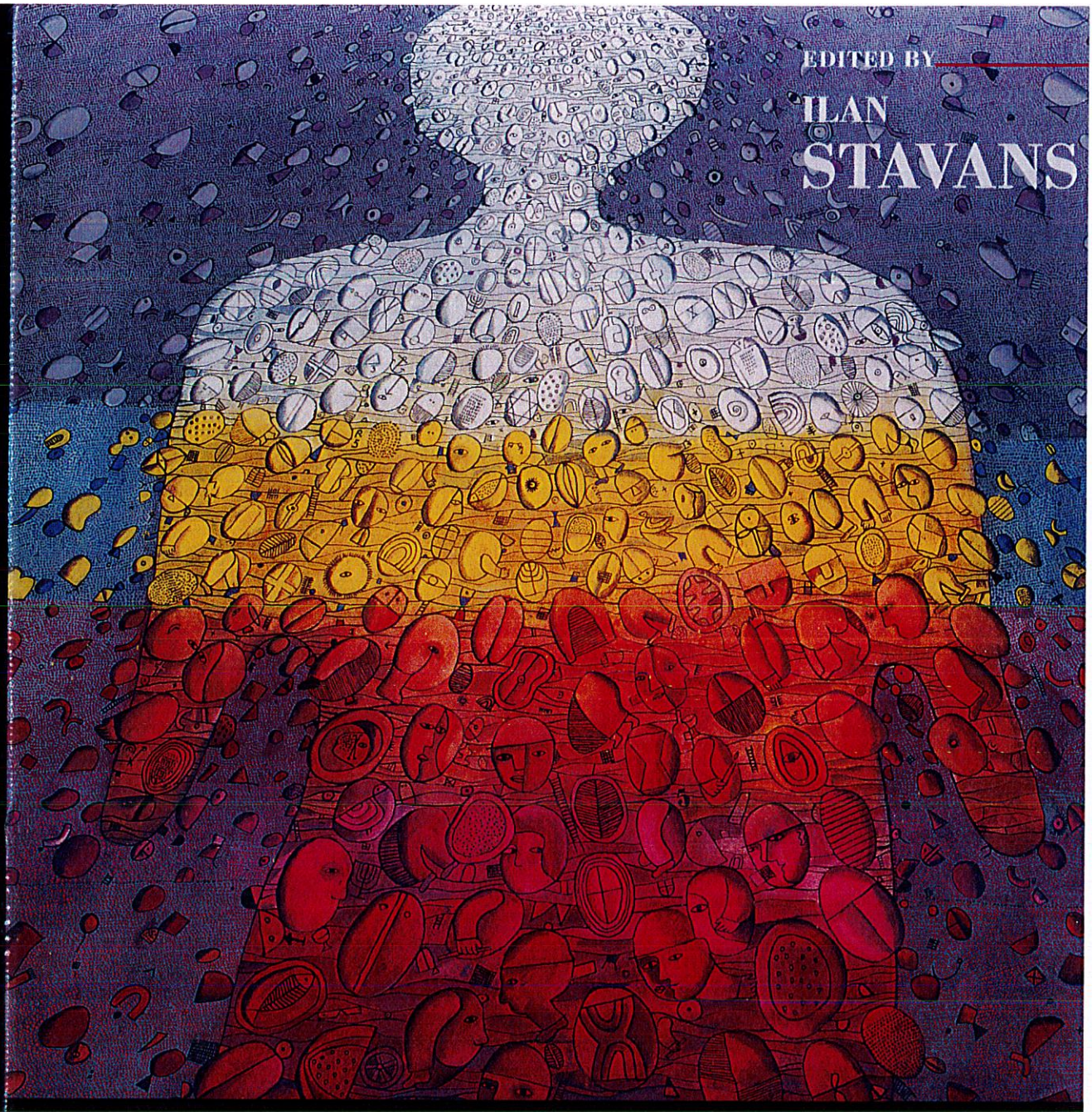

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The Oxford Handbook *of* LATINO STUDIES

CHAPTER 9

LATINO PHILOSOPHY

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LATINO philosophy is a relatively new field of inquiry that has Hispanic and Latin American philosophy as its closest relatives. Like these kinfolk, it devotes considerable attention to self-regarding foundational debates concerning its nature, quality, and relations with other areas of philosophy. Yet Latino philosophy is a newcomer to foundational debates of this sort. Of the three fields, Latin American philosophy is the one that can claim the longest history of engagement in them, going back at least to the mid-twentieth century. Not surprisingly, then, Latino philosophy turns to this history in search of paradigms for its own reflection.

This essay argues, however, that the prospect of Latino philosophy's finding adequate paradigms in the works of most academic Latin American philosophers is quite bleak. For in Latin America, it is the so-called *pensadores* or *ensayistas* (thinkers or essayists) who have advanced the most interesting philosophical issues and arguments. Like *philosophes* Michel de Montaigne and Miguel de Unamuno, non-academic thinkers Bartolomé de las Casas and Juana de la Cruz during the colonial period, or José Martí and Octavio Paz during the twentieth century (to name but a few), have produced works with philosophical import that are original, insightful, and illustrative of the intellectual history of the region. They have produced them while reflecting on mostly literary, political, and social topics of the region. But underestimating these thinkers' issues and arguments, the academic philosophers instead focus on more universal questions of philosophy, which they pursue vigorously though, by their own assessment, not very successfully in terms of originality or internal and external visibility. As far they can see, this situation leaves them two options: either adopt some form of radical skepticism about Latin American philosophy's nature, significance, and even existence, or have an overconfident optimism about its achievements and prospects. Neither of these extremes can be of help in meeting the originality and invisibility challenges that, most agree, face Latin American philosophy.

Luckily, however, in its short history Latino philosophy has given a few signs that it might be able to avoid such extreme positions while continuing to develop its own

areas of interest and gain professional recognition. The brief exploration offered here suggests that Latino philosophy counts on an active philosophical community in the United States, comprising philosophers of different theoretical frameworks who engage in reasoned argument, not only among themselves but also with their Latin American peers. In this essay, I look closely at two areas where their work supports the view that Latino philosophy has a bright future. One area concerns some recent debates about the foundations of Latino philosophy and its closest relatives. The other area involves Latino philosophy's contribution to the "Latino"-versus-"Hispanic" controversy.

The Nature of Latino Philosophy and Its Closest Relatives

What counts, or should count, as Latino philosophy, if anything at all? Practitioners of this field of inquiry commonly take it to be a continuum with Hispanic and Latin American philosophy. They even hesitate about which of these types of philosophy best identifies their own work. Illustrating this overlap is the fact that, up to now, no major philosophical society or periodical publication in the United States bears the sole qualifier, *Latino*. The American Philosophical Association, for example, has a Committee on Hispanics that offers an annual prize for an essay in Latin American philosophy and publishes a by-annual *Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*. So in order to answer the earlier question, I need to start with a broader quest: determining the nature of Latino, Hispanic, and Latin American philosophy.

Practitioners of Latino philosophy, probably following the lead of Jorge Gracia, often think of this task as one that concerns this philosophy's "identity." But not all of those who reflect on this foundational issue agree with using the concept of identity in that way. Critics such as Jorge Garcia advocate the replacement of that locution with "instantiation" or "membership" of a type of philosophy. Yet since instantiation *is* partial identity (e.g., being a terrier in part identifies Maria's dog), it does not seem incorrect to regard our task as one of determining philosophical identity. In any event, I can avoid the underlying metaphysical discussion by simply taking our task to be that of determining the *nature* of Latino, Hispanic, or Latin American philosophy. A common approach to this task is to identify whatever properties works must have to fall under a certain kind of philosophy. In the case of Latino philosophy, it seems natural that, if Maria's and Jose's works are both instances of philosophy of that kind, then their works must share one or more properties that are necessary and sufficient for being included within it. Now we will consider some candidates for such properties.

Latino, Hispanic, and Latin American Philosophy's Nature

A good starting place for identifying the defining properties for the fields of concern here is Gracia's view of Hispanic philosophy as "the philosophy developed in the Iberian peninsula, the Iberian colonies in the New World, and the countries that those colonies eventually came to form."[1] There seems to be consensus that a hybrid historico-geopolitical criterion along these lines determines what counts as Hispanic philosophy. For example, echoing Gracia, Jaime Nubiola maintains that Hispanic philosophy comprises "all the philosophical thinking that has been developed over the last few hundred years in Spain and Portugal, the Spanish colonies of the New World, and the countries which grew from them."[2] Nubiola traces this criterion to Eduardo Nicol's *The Problem of Hispanic Philosophy* (*El problema de la filosofía hispánica*, 1961), published during his exile in Mexico. Note that since Nubiola includes Portugal in the list, it seems natural to include Brazil as well (more on this later). Thus amended, the Nicol/Nubiola criterion for inclusion in Hispanic philosophy coincides with Gracia's.

But literally construed, this criterion locates within Hispanic philosophy the philosophy developed in the US states of Texas or California, each of which was once under Spanish rule. To avoid such a result, something along these lines is needed:

1. Hispanic philosophy is the philosophy developed in Spain, Portugal, and what today are the officially Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking nations of the Americas, from the time they were under Iberian rule to the present.

Now we have a definition that takes some linguistic, historical, and geopolitical properties to be necessary and sufficient for inclusion in Hispanic philosophy. And we may use analogous sets of properties to identify the nearby fields of Spanish American and Latin American philosophy in this way:

2. Spanish American philosophy is the philosophy developed in Spain and what today are the officially Spanish-speaking nations of the Americas, from the time they were under Spanish rule to the present.
3. Latin American philosophy is the philosophy developed in what today are the officially Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking nations of the Americas, from the time they were under Iberian rule to the present.

Corresponding to 1 through 3 are some existing fields of academic philosophy in the Spanish-speaking world, respectively known as (1) *filosofía hispana* or *hispánica*, (2) *filosofía hispanoamericana,* and (3) *filosofía latinoamericana* or *iberoamericana*.[3] Besides

their currency, these categories seem flexible enough to allow for the inclusion of subsets such as Spanish philosophy, Brazilian philosophy, Puerto Rican philosophy, and so on. For example, Spanish philosophy comes out as a subset of Hispanic philosophy, and Brazilian philosophy as a subset of both Hispanic and Latin American philosophy. Of course, we might have second thoughts about a criterion that would include Brazilian philosophy as a type of Hispanic philosophy. But no criterion is likely to be free of borderline cases due to vagueness, so some degree of it must be tolerated. With this in mind, let us put a similar criterion at the service of identifying Latino philosophy. It yields something like this:

4. Latino philosophy is the philosophy developed by people from the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America who are living in the United States.

Here there is no linguistic property at work because some practitioners of Latino philosophy are speakers of neither Spanish nor Portuguese, though (4) adds an ethnic factor ("people from..."). But do we really wish to count as *Latino* the philosophy developed by US residents from Spain, Portugal, or Brazil? And do we really wish to exclude the philosophy developed by Latinos who have relocated to Canada or the United Kingdom just because they no longer live in the United States? Such borderline cases can be bracketed in this way:

5. Latino philosophy is the philosophy developed by anyone to whom the term "Latino" *definitely* applies.

Although Latino philosophers disagree about what to make of the borderline cases, they are likely to accept that

> "Latino" as an ethnic-group term *definitely* applies to people who reside in the US and are from the mainly Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America by birth or ancestry.[4]

Thus construed, our criterion invokes a complex set of properties concerning language, geopolitics, ethnicity, culture, and genetics (depending on how "ancestry" is construed). Yet in spite of its complexity, this set fails to provide any interesting sense of Latino philosophy—or so it is argued next.

Latino Philosophy in an Interesting Sense

In fact, neither of the aforementioned hybrid criteria succeeds in capturing what is characteristic or distinctive (and therefore interesting) about Latino philosophy and its closest relatives. Given criterion 5, for example, Latino philosophy includes works ordinarily excluded, while excluding works ordinarily included. Thus, the criterion is both too broad and too narrow, as becomes clear in the cases of Ofelia Schutte and Ernesto Sosa, Cuban

born philosophers living in the United States to whom the terms "Latina" and "Latino" definitely apply. By criterion 5, the philosophical work of either Schutte or Sosa falls into Latino philosophy. Yet it is only Schutte's work that clearly falls into that category, since Sosa's is entirely devoted to epistemology and other main branches of Western philosophy.

At the same time, philosophers to whom the term "Latino" definitely *does not* apply may produce works in Latino philosophy, provided those works bear on philosophical matters that are content-related to Latinos. Thus construed, Latino philosophy has a wide scope extending from the foundational issues of concern here to issues of feminist theory, applied ethics, political philosophy, and many more (e.g., affirmative action, Latino identity, human rights, immigration rights, and linguistic rights). For example, Lawrence Blum's 2009 analysis of some philosophical theories on Latino racial and ethnic identity, as well as James Sterba's 1996 moral reflection on Amerindians and the Spanish Conquest, are eligible for inclusion in Latino philosophy, even though (as far as I know) neither Blum nor Sterba is Latino.

Criterion 3 similarly fails to capture the nature of Latin American philosophy. After all, being produced in the officially Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking nations of the Americas is demonstrably neither necessary nor sufficient for instantiating that type of philosophy. In fact, most of the works by academic philosophers in Latin America count as Latin American philosophy only in a weak, quite un-interesting sense that fuels the radical skepticism and overconfident optimism mentioned earlier. By contrast, some works by non-academic thinkers would fit within that philosophy in a content-related sense analogous to the criterion I have proposed for the interesting sense of Latino philosophy.

That a content-related criterion of inclusion is more adequate follows from a more general principle according to which, to qualify as philosophy type X, a philosophical work (theory, argument, problem) must be *content-related* to X. Such a principle goes without saying. After all, to qualify as normative ethics, a philosophical work must be about, say, moral rules, values, or character traits. A philosophical work bearing on none of these simply falls under another branch of philosophy. Similarly, to qualify as Latino philosophy, a philosophical work must address issues that bear on some aspect of the experiences and theoretical concerns of Latinos. And to qualify as Latin American philosophy, a philosophical work must have some content relation to Latin America. Since many of the non-academic thinkers' works do bear that type of relation, we must count them as Latin American philosophy. Any alternative is likely to lead us to skepticism about the field's quality, whether the old skepticism of Risieri Frondizi and Augusto Salazar Bondy, or new skepticism of Guillermo Hurtado and Carlos Pereda, among others.

The "Ethnic-Philosophy" Standard of Inclusion

Latin American academic philosophers sometimes do consider the non-academic thinkers' traditions. Circumstantialist Leopoldo Zea does examine positivism in

Mexico, and liberationist Arturo Roig does study the political thought of nineteenth-century nation builders. But these are isolated instances. Frondizi and Pereda illustrate the prevailing norm, which is to praise those thinkers' essays and then assign them no place in the philosophical history of the region. By contrast, in Latino philosophy they figure prominently, not only in the few courses for undergraduates and graduates now offered in the United States, but also in some training programs for instructors and publications aimed at teaching or research.[5] Textual evidence from these sources suggests that, in Latino philosophy, practitioners of different philosophical persuasions construe the field broadly, in ways that can accommodate the non-academic philosophical traditions.

But not all of them agree on how this is to be justified. After all, the non-academic philosophical traditions plainly flout widely accepted standards for what counts as philosophy in major centers of the West. Gracia attempts to justify their inclusion by offering a dual standard.[6] In his view, Latino philosophy comprises both the non-academic and the academic philosophical traditions of Latin America because it is an "ethnic" philosophy. Unlike non-ethnic philosophies, the ethnic can focus on non-academic philosophical traditions since whatever a relevant ethnos decides to include, it would fall within its philosophy. At the same time, whatever meets the universal criteria of Western philosophy would seem to count, too. After all, Gracia does include within the scope of Latino/Latin American philosophy the universalist philosophers mentioned earlier. In addition, he takes the ethnic-philosophy approach to best capture his view that no single property is necessary and sufficient for inclusion in Latino philosophy.

But Gracia's view does rely on a cluster of such properties after all, something that becomes evident when spelled out as follows:

The Ethnic-Philosophy's Dual Standard of Inclusion

Any tradition/theory/argument counts as Latino philosophy just in case it has either

a) the property of being counted as such by the Latino ethnos, or
b) the properties of meeting Western philosophy's universal standards of inclusion and having been produced by a Latino/Latin American philosopher.

Given the relativistic property in (a), Latino philosophy comprises the works with philosophical import of non-academic thinkers, provided Latinos say so. Given the conjunction of properties in (b), Latino philosophy also comprises the works of Latino/Latin American philosophers that satisfy some objective criteria of inclusion. It follows that the ethnic-philosophy approach must satisfy either (a) or (b) to be sufficient for inclusion.

In any event, the ethnic-philosophy approach conflicts with the intuitions that (b) is not sufficient to qualify for Latino or Latin American philosophy, as suggested by the Schutte/Sosa case. That approach explicitly includes, for example, Risieri Frondizi's

universalist work in axiology, on the grounds that it meets something like (b). And since it excludes similar work by the European philosopher who most influenced Frondizi, the rationale for including one while excluding the other must be that, of the two, only Frondizi was Latin American.[7] But most of Frondizi's work fails to qualify as Latin American philosophy in the interesting sense outlined earlier.

At the same time, it seems that the aforementioned properties in (a) and (b) pull in opposite directions. For as Renzo Llorente points out, given a universalist standard of inclusion in Latino philosophy, "We should either reject Gracia's view that the ethnos enjoys a privileged position in determining what artifacts count as ethnic philosophy or else opt for a word other than philosophy to designate the corpus of works that are judged by the ethnos as forming a part of its philosophy."[8] Furthermore, does the ethnic-philosophy theorist really avoid the academic philosophers' extreme positions mentioned at the outset? Consider radical skepticism, a view that generally questions the quality, not the existence, of Latin American philosophy. The ethnic-philosophy approach is consistent with radical skepticism. And since it offers no clear way to decide what to include in this field, it might contribute to perpetuating some biases that undermine Latino philosophy's standing in the United States, a problem we will have more to say about later.

In spite of these shortcomings, some Latino philosophers find merit in the ethnic-philosophy approach. For instance, José Antonio Orosco explicitly embraces it for Mexican American and Latin American philosophy on the grounds that, thus conceived, these types of philosophy can have great prospects in the United States. In his view, their main task is developing "the perspective of the Latin American ethnos...," which includes the perspective of the Latino ethnos. To do that, Latino philosophy should devote itself to reflection on "questions about [Latino] identity, power, and citizenship in the United States."[9] So its potential for making the expected contributions resides in its ability to deal with certain issues of applied ethics and political philosophy that can have an impact on "U.S. American political and social life." Here charity requires to avoid reading Orosco as suggesting some sort of reductionism according to which these are the *only* issues that matter, or should matter, to Latino philosophy. After all, such a reductionism would be self-defeating since Orosco himself engages foundational issues of Latino philosophy. Not only is reductionism an obstacle for making progress on such issues, it also has some unwelcome theoretical and practical consequences.

But before considering these, let us summarize the challenges facing the ethnic-philosophy approach to Latino philosophy. First, to avoid the thorough-going relativism implicit in its dual standard of inclusion, it must find a standard more objective than (a), the *mere* acceptance by the Latino ethnos. Second, it needs to meet counterarguments for thinking that *content-relation* to Latinos or Latin Americans is what matters most for inclusion in Latino and Latin American philosophy.[10] After all, as we have seen, there is no strong reason for including philosophers such as Sosa in those fields when construed in the interesting sense suggested earlier.

Reductionism about Latino Philosophy and the Insularity Problem

Reductionism about Latino philosophy demonstrably has bad theoretical consequences. For one thing, it is incompatible with the view proposed here, according to which any philosophical work content related to Latinos qualifies as Latino philosophy. This view welcomes *any* philosophical subjects satisfying that condition, whether it be about foundational issues or issues of general and applied philosophy.

Given reductionism about Latino philosophy, no such openness is possible since Latino philosophy would be a mere instrument for remedying afflictions affecting Latinos, such as economic oppression and social injustice. Although proponents of reductionism of various sorts often leave implicit their instrumentalist conception of Latino philosophy, not all do. For example, Silva (2015) is quite explicit in assigning to it the single role of contributing to the struggle of Latinos and Latin Americans against colonialism. Now, are Latinos today still in need of liberation from that historical evil? The answer depends on very complex historical, political, and socioeconomic matters that cannot be settled from the philosopher's armchair. As a result, the burden of argument is on the reductionists, who are in need of supporting empirical data from history and the social sciences that they tend to ignore. Without such support, their arguments are simply unsound.

Moreover, reductionism also has some bad practical consequences. By resting on unsupported assumptions, it helps to perpetuate the bias that anything goes in Latino philosophy (i.e., that in this field, unsupported empirical claims go unchecked). There is evidence that such a bias undermines Latino philosophy's current standing in the philosophical community of the United States. Susanna Siegel, for instance, points to this bias while commenting on the "insularity" problem facing that field. She thinks that the problem is partly "due to the fact that philosophical questions are genuinely distinct from many questions in neighboring fields in both the social sciences and the humanities."[11] Latino philosophy should avoid conflating these because it simply lacks the resources for settling questions in neighboring fields.

Since reductionism has unwelcome theoretical and practical consequences, it should be rejected swiftly. It provides no good reason for limiting the scope of Latino philosophy to some sociopolitical matters. Moreover, since it conflates philosophical with nonphilosophical questions, it ends up making claims that are better investigated elsewhere. In addition, it stands in the way of an unbiased appraisal of Latino and Latin American philosophy, which in turn undermines the standing of Latino philosophers in the profession. Gracia, Mendieta, Sánchez, and Vargas are among those lamenting the fact that practitioners of either field lack the standing they deserve.[12]

A Success Story: The "Latino" Versus "Hispanic" Puzzle

Qualifiers such as "Latino" and "Hispanic" have semantic and pragmatic features so puzzling that they have prompted one of Latino philosophy's most fruitful developments. For consider the following claims:

(i) Either "Latino" or "Hispanic" should be preferred as a term that definitely applies to US residents who are from the officially Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America by birth or ancestry.
(ii) No such ethnic-group term is devoid of some harmful connotations.
(iii) Terms with harmful connotations should never be used.

Claims (i) through (iii) create a puzzle because each of them seems true, yet they are inconsistent. Solving this puzzle requires abandoning at least one of them. Nihilism, a position rarely held in philosophy but not unknown in Latino studies, argues that since (ii) and (iii) are true, (i) must be rejected as false: there is no justification for using any such ethnic-group terms.[13] By contrast, Latino philosophers generally converge in holding that (iii) must be recast since it is false as stated. But before they can make an affirmative case for the choice of either "Latino" or "Hispanic," they should first consider the reasons underwriting nihilism.

Nihilism about "Latino" and "Hispanic"

Nihilism offers moral and prudential reasons against the use of any ethnic-group term for the US residents who are from the Spanish-speaking world by birth or ancestry. They all point to the fact that their usage distorts our understanding of these diverse people and promotes harmful stereotypes and biases about them. Although practical reasons may justify using nationality terms (e.g., "Cuban," "Guatemalan," etc.) and even regional terms ("Latin American," "Mesoamerican," etc.), there is no justification for using "Latinos," "Hispanics," and the like. Neither of them refers to a sociologically interesting category, one that can capture an actual group of people. Rather, they appear to pick out a group made up for the purpose of social control, economic exploitation, or other forms of domination.

But more is needed to get nihilism off the ground since some seemingly plausible reasons recommend the adoption of "Latino," "Hispanic," or both. For example, Gracia

contends that the widespread adoption of "Hispanic" may promote empowerment, pride, and liberation from relations of dependence.[14] He argues that "Latino" plays an analogous role.[15] In the course of objecting to Gracia's earlier preference of "Hispanic," Linda Alcoff offers similar arguments for the adoption of "Latino."[16] Both Alcoff and Gracia have reasons for thinking that the liberating role of "Latino" far outweighs any harmful connotations associated with that term. To avoid begging the question, nihilism must defeat those reasons. Even if they were defeated, it does not follow that there is no strong reason supporting the adoption of an ethnic-group term for the intended group.

Moreover, negative connotations associated with "Latino" or "Hispanic" operate at the pragmatic level and therefore need be neither stable nor permanent. To illustrate this, consider "Latin American." As the story goes, the French introduced this term in the nineteenth century to advance their colonialist, anti-Hispanic agenda in the region.[17] But, unaffected by the later defeat of that agenda, "Latin American" caught on in the speech community and became a term of pride, as is evident in the writings of many non-academic thinkers. Today the term has none of its colonialist initial connotations.

In reply, nihilism might invoke the morally objectionable role of some ethnic-group labels in human history. Think of "Marrano" and "Moor" in early Renaissance Spain, or "Jew" and "Gipsy" in Nazi Germany. Yet there is no evidence that either "Latino" or "Hispanic" has widespread associations that play a comparable evil role. In consequence, Latino philosophy's consensus against nihilism prevails. Nihilism falls short of supporting its rejection of (i) earlier, the thesis that either "Latino" or "Hispanic" should be preferred as a term that definitely applies to US residents who, by birth or ancestry, are from the officially Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America. We'll now consider Latino philosophy's attempt to solve the puzzle by recasting (iii), the thesis that no term with some harmful connotations should ever be used.

The Semantics and Pragmatics of Ethnic-Group Terms

Latino philosophy's solution to the "Latino" versus "Hispanic" puzzle consists in first distinguishing the semantic from the pragmatic features of ethnic-group terms and then arguing that any harmful connotations associated with "Latino" or "Hispanic" are merely pragmatic. Furthermore, some positive results of adopting one of those terms far outweigh their negative pragmatic connotations. Given these claims, a preference for "Latino" or "Hispanic" ultimately depends on the evidence about these terms' connotations, together with an assessment of what term is best for the intended group of people prudentially and morally. Now we will have a closer look at the steps in Latino philosophy's solution to the puzzle.

In response to nihilism, Latino philosophy distinguishes the semantic features of ethnic-group terms (i.e., their meaning and reference) from their pragmatic connotations (i.e., the associations made by some users of the terms). Regarding their semantic features, Latino philosophy has produced two different accounts. Alcoff's and Gracia's works (chapters 1 and 3) have views about "Latino" and "Hispanic" more compatible with a descriptivist account, while Nuccetelli explicitly embraces a referentialist account.[18] The difference between these two hinges on whether they assign a central role to those terms' meanings in determining their reference. Descriptivism does, referentialism does not. True, Gracia holds that *no single description* or meaning can determine the reference of "Hispanic," because the term applies to an exceedingly diverse group of people who do not share a single essential property, such as having a certain language, religion, race, culture, or political conviction. But it is also true that he assigns the following *cluster of descriptions* to the group:

> 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.* It excludes the population of other countries in the world and the inhabitants of Iberia and Latin America before 1942 because, 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.[19]

That is, on this account, "Hispanic" refers to anyone who satisfies one of these descriptions:

1. Being an inhabitant of Spain or Portugal after the Encounter of 1492; or
2. Being an inhabitant of Spain's or Portugal's colonies after 1492; or
3. Being a descendant of people with property 1 or 2, together with living somewhere else and having some link to those people.

Numbers 1 to 3 combine certain geopolitical-historical descriptions, while 1 adds a complex description that may involve biology ("being a descendant of") and possibly culture, language, or religion ("having some link").

When these descriptions are taken to determine the reference of "Hispanic," the view is vulnerable to counterexamples. For one thing, since it selects the Encounter of 1492 as crucial identity-conferring historical property, it faces challenges based on the arbitrariness of the selection. Robert Gooding Williams, for instance, asks why not choose 1441, the year Portugal launched its West African slave trade, an event that arguably enabled the ulterior Iberian expansion?[20] And Alcoff counters, why not 1898?[21] After all, 1492 is too remote to capture some historical events that have determined membership of the group and continue to do so. Here Alcoff has in mind sociopolitical, military, and

economic developments pointing to US colonial policies toward Latin America (e.g., US interference in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, Honduras, and so on). In her view, 1898 is the crucial identity-conferring date because it was then that the United States gave loud signals of its colonialist aspirations in the region and Spain lost its last foothold in it. To Alcoff, Latinos are still afflicted by American colonialism. Notice, however, that Alcoff is not only in the business of merely offering an arbitrariness objection to Gracia. She is also arguing for preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic," a choice likely motivated by political belief combined with consequentialist concerns regarding what is in the best interest of Latinos and Latin Americans. But in the course of raising her objection, she ascribes certain semantic features to her preferred term, thereby making her account a form of descriptivism as vulnerable to the arbitrariness objection as Gracia's. For why not choose 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo sealed the results of a colonialist war that, according to Carlos Fuentes, left a scar in the Latin American mind?[22] And if 1898 is the identity-conferring date for Latinos, which for Alcoff include residents of Latin America, it follows that Juana de la Cruz (b. 1651–d. 1695), Simón Bolívar (b. 1783–d. 1830), and Juan Bautista Alberdi (b. 1810–d. 1884) were not Latin American at all. To avoid such preposterous results, Alcoff might, like Gracia, propose a disjunctive cluster of descriptions that determine the reference of "Latino." But it would be difficult to come up with a cluster immune to counterexamples. The lack of consensus about which descriptions are best would imply that we do not know what we are talking about when we use the term.

Given referentialism, however, we *do* know it even if there is no consensus about the exact meaning of the term. On this alternative account, descriptivism runs into trouble because it assigns too large a semantic role to descriptive meanings, none of which is essential for determining the reference of "Latino," "Hispanic," and the like. What is essential instead is that these terms be used in ways that defer to the speakers who first introduced them with those references. It is not uncommon that speakers introduce a term to refer to an ethnic group and later see that term catch on in a speech community in spite of any initial misconceptions they associate with the term's reference. Such mistaken descriptions may not be shared by all users, or they may eventually disappear or change.[23] This suggests that they are inessential for an ethnic-group term in picking out its reference, though they may matter pragmatically.

Both descriptivists and referentialists can agree that when some ethnic-group terms have negative pragmatic connotations that outweigh any positive ones, they should not be used on moral and prudential grounds. But when that is not the case, the choice of a term depends on other pragmatic factors, such as context and purpose of utterance. Factors of these sorts in part explain the difficulty of settling the controversy of "Latino" versus "Hispanic," which depends also on the fact that the exact reference of these terms is still under negotiation (as is, for instance, the reference of "right action"—since ethicists are still debating whether it denotes any action that promotes overall happiness, one that respects persons as ends in themselves, one that leads to a good life, or one that does something else).[24]

Solving the "Latino" Versus "Hispanic" Puzzle

Recall that on Gracia's view, "Hispanic" applies to all the post-Encounter peoples of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America, as well as to anyone living elsewhere who has some link to these peoples. "Latino" denotes a subset of Hispanics: roughly, Latin Americans living in the United States. Alcoff seems to agree. Given the Gracia/Alcoff view, then, it does not make sense to dispute which of these terms is best: the selection criterion for usage should be communicational need. After all, as Llorente points out, in this view, "What we have . . . is one ethnic group nested within another, larger group. Latino would be to Hispanic as, say, Guarani is to Latino or Ashkenazi is to Jew."[25] Thus, "We may sometimes wish to stress a person's status as a Latino rather than as a Hispanic." Note that Llorente also regards Latin Americans (represented by the Guarani in his argument) as a subset of Latinos, which adds to the present confusion about the reference of the relevant terms, since many would reject that classification altogether.

In philosophy, however, the usual antidote to conceptual confusion is stipulative definition, a strategy apparently adopted by Ilan Stavans when, after examining the history and connotations of the terms under controversy, he suggests:

- Use "Latino" for "those citizens from the Spanish-speaking world living in the United States."
- Use "Hispanic" for those citizens from the Spanish-speaking world "living elsewhere."[26]

But these stipulations are almost certain to face objection from philosophical quarters. Some might want an explicit broad construal of "being from . . ." inclusive of birth and ancestry. Others might object to the exclusion of borderline cases. For example, Gracia takes "Hispanic" to refer also to post-Encounter Portuguese and Brazilian people.[27] Tammelleo takes "Latino" to include Brazilians in its reference.[28] Angelo Corlett explicitly defers to Gracia's use of "Hispanic" as a source for his own use of "Latino," which he takes to refer to "those of us with Iberian ancestry."[29] But since Stavans and many others disagree with the inclusion of people from the Portuguese-speaking world in the reference of "Hispanic" and "Latino," their disagreement suggests that neither of these terms *definitely* applies to those peoples. At the same time, contra Stavans, some would deny that "Latino" also refers to the Spaniards who reside in the United States: in that case, those US residents might have grounds for affirmative-action claims. And it is not clear that they should have grounds for such claims on any adequate principle of compensatory justice. To avoid these unsettled discussions, Stavans's stipulations can be recast this way:

- Use "Latino" as a term that *definitely* refers to anyone who (a) is from Spanish-speaking Latin America, either by birth or descent, and (b) resides in the United States.
- Use "Hispanic" as a term that *definitely* refers to anyone else who (a) is from the Spanish-speaking world, either by birth or descent, and (b) resides outside the United States.

Since here the reference of "Latino" is not included in that of "Hispanic," the controversy about which term is best becomes otiose.

The Upshot

Anyone exploring Latino philosophy will soon discover an incipient but active field of inquiry engaging practitioners of many philosophical persuasions. In spite of their differences, they nonetheless manage to establish a dialogue among themselves and with other peers on questions that, as this essay illustrates, range from Latino philosophy's foundations to some issues of philosophy of language and moral and social philosophy related to the experiences of Latinos in the United States. Although in exploring its own nature Latino philosophy faces challenges analogous to those that have stalled its closest relatives, on the basis of some promising signs Latino philosophy might be able to overcome those challenges.

One such challenge comes from the temptation to take the easy path of reductionism, a dogmatist outlook assigning Latino philosophy the sole task of advancing some sociopolitical agenda such as contributing to the liberation of Latinos from colonialist oppression. This essay has argued against reductionism on the grounds that not only does it make empirical claims without solid supporting evidence, but it also has the prudentially bad consequence of undermining Latino philosophy's status in the profession. Since these reasons appear to be stronger than any argument reductionism can field, Latino philosophy should reject reductionism summarily.

Another challenge for Latino philosophy is falling into either radical skepticism or overconfident optimism, two extreme positions that are familiar from the failure of Latin American philosophy to come up with a compelling account of its own nature. The best antidote against these afflictions is a proper understanding of the foundations of these fields. On my view, if Latino philosophy can move beyond a merely historical/geopolitical understanding of what distinguishes it from other types of philosophy, its prospect of avoiding those afflictions would be brighter. This article has suggested that it should conceive of itself as a philosophy that is *content-related to Latinos* rather than as a philosophy *produced by Latinos*. That should widen its already noticeable friendliness toward traditions that are content-related to Latinos, especially those of the non-academic philosophical thinkers of Latin America. By contrast, the universalist conception most favored by Latin American philosophers encourages their tendency to ignore the

pensadores. They confine the pensadores' work to *pensamiento latinoamericano* ("Latin American thought"), a subfield in the margins of philosophy. But, given Latino philosophy's developments outlined here, there is great hope that it would not make that mistake, at least any time soon.

Epilogue

While in graduate school in the United States, my classmates asked me on more than one occasion: "Why hasn't there been anyone working in Latino or Latin American philosophy who has achieved the international recognition of, say, American philosopher Willard van Orman Quine?" Questions along this line have also appeared in print—for example, in Euryalo Cannabrava's 1949 article in the prestigious *Journal of Philosophy.* Socioeconomic and cultural differences can account at least in part for this and other disparities in the philosophical development of the Americas. The answer to my classmates should have been a "So what?" For nothing of substance follows about the quality of these types of philosophy from the fact that they have no Quine. The study of this issue belongs not to philosophy but to the history and sociology of knowledge.

But such anecdotal evidence is suggestive of the negative attitude that those considering work in Latino philosophy may face from the academic philosophical establishment in North America. On my experience, that's no reason to be deterred. Philosophers willing to delve into issues of Latino philosophy at some length should be encouraged instead by the fact that, in spite of the skepticism of the establishment, a rising interest in Latino philosophy suggests that its issues are worth pursuing for their own sake—something this chapter has attempted to show. Furthermore, the practice of Latino philosophy can carry some positive practical consequences. For one thing, it can help overcome a bias that is partly responsible for the intellectual isolation of scholars working in Latino philosophy. These tend to be perceived as outsiders working on "non-philosophical" topics. But the process of changing that perception is already underway, and new scholars can help to accelerate it. In addition, scholars in Latino philosophy have the opportunity to reflect on novel topics widely neglected in standard areas of philosophy, from ethics and social and political philosophy to philosophy of language and feminist philosophy. Serious work on those topics will contribute to shifting the burden of argument to establishment philosophers. In this way new scholars could make an important contribution not only to the understanding of issues that concern Latinos but also to the widening of the scope of North America's mainstream in the academic discipline of philosophy.

Notes

1. Jorge J. Gracia, E. "Hispanic Philosophy: Its Beginning and Golden Age," *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (1993): 475.

2. Jaime Nubiola, "C. S. Peirce and the Hispanic Philosophy of the Twentieth Century," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34, no. 1 (1998): 32.
3. See, for instance, Manuel Garrido, Nelson R. Orringer, Luis M. Valdés, and Margarita M. Valdés, eds., *El legado filosófico español e hispanoamericano del siglo XX* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009) and José Luis Gómez-Martínez, ed., *Projecto Ensayo Hispánico: Antología del Ensayo Hispánico*, 1997–2015, http://www.ensayistas.org/.
4. Note that the exact reference of "Latino" is still under negotiation. While there is agreement that people who live in the United States and are from the mostly Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America definitely count as Latinos (see J. Angelo Corlett, "Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy," in *Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identity*, ed. Jorge J. E Gracia [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007], 225–247) and Tammello counts also those from Brazil (see Steve Tammelleo, "Continuity and Change in Hispanic Identity," *Ethnicities* 11, no. 4 [2011]: 536–554). Alcoff includes them too—together with the non-US residents of Latin America, which she considers Latinos. See Linda Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic: The Politics of Ethnic Names," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31 (2005): 395–408. Gracia is unclear about whether Latinos on his view include US residents who are from Portugal and Spain (by birth or ancestry) (see Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2008]). See Ilan Stavans, "Life in the Hyphen," in *The Essential Ilan Stavans* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3–26. Stavans includes only US residents who are from the Spanish-speaking world; but this means that he classifies within the group the Spaniards who live in the United States—something that, as discussed later, some may dispute on justice grounds concerning eligibility for affirmative action.
5. Illustrating this tendency of Latino philosophy are two NEH-sponsored programs focused on the Latin American, non-academic philosophical traditions: a 2005 Summer Institute at the University of Buffalo co-directed by Jorge Gracia and Susana Nuccetelli, and a 2006 series of workshops at the University of Texas/Pan American co-directed by Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay. Collections of primary and secondary sources on them include Jorge J. E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, eds., *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 2003); see also Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otavio Bueno, eds., *Blackwell Companion to Latin American Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay, eds., *Latin American Philosophy: An Introduction with Readings* (Upper Saddle Brook, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004); and Jorge J. E. Gracia, ed., *Forging People: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). For a sample of current syllabi, see http://www.apaonline.org/members/group_content_view.asp?group=110430&id=380970#latin.
6. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 142–144.
7. Gracia, Jorge J. E. "Identity and Latin American Philosophy," in *Blackwell Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, ed. Nuccetelli, Schutte, and Bueno (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 256.
8. Renzo Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 75.
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 (Spring 2016): 23–28.

10. Susana Nuccetelli, "Is 'Latin American Thought' Philosophy?," *Metaphilosophy* 4 (2003): 524–537; and Ilan Stavans, "The Language Prism," in *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity*, ed. Iván Jaksić (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 131–137.
11. Susanna Siegel, "Reflections on the Use of English and Spanish in Analytic Philosophy," *Informes del Observatorio/Observatorio Reports*, Instituto Cervantes, Harvard University, 2014, http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/006_informes_ss_analytic_philosophy.pdf.
12. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Eduardo Mendieta, "Is There Latin American Philosophy?," *Philosophy Today* 43 (1999): 50–61; Carlos Alberto Sánchez, "Philosophy and the Post-Immigrant Fear," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 18, no. 1 (2011): 31–42; Manuel Vargas, "*Real* Philosophy, Metaphilosophy, and Metametaphilosophy: On the Plight of Latin American Philosophy," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 7, no. 3 (2007): 51–78; and Manuel Vargas, "On the Value of Philosophy: The Latin American Case," *Comparative Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2010): 33–52.
13. See, e.g., Martha Gimenez, "'Latino? Hispanic?' Who Needs a Name? The Case Against a Standardized Terminology," *International Journal of Health Services* 19 (1989): 557–571; and Suzanne Oboler, "The Politics of Ethnic Construction: Hispanic, Chicano, Latino…?," *Latin American Perspectives* 19 (1992): 18–36.
14. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity*, 21–26.
15. Gracia, *Latinos in America*.
16. Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic."
17. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity*; Guillermo Hurtado, "El diálogo filosófico interamericano como un diálogo para la democracia," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 1 (2010): 1–17.
18. Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic"; Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity* (chapters 1 and 3); Susana Nuccetelli, "'Hispanics,' 'Latinos,' and 'Iberoamericans': Naming or Describing?" *Philosophical Forum* 32 (2001): 175–188; Susana Nuccetelli, *Latin American Thought: Philosophical Problems and Arguments* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002); and Susana Nuccetelli, "Reference and Ethnic-Group Terms." *Inquiry* 6 (2004): 528–544.
19. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity*, 48–49, emphasis mine. See also Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity*, 52.
20. Robert Gooding-Williams, "Comment on J. J. E. Gracia's *Hispanic/Latino Identity*," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 27, no. 2 (2002): 3–10.
21. Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic."
22. Carlos Fuentes, *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
23. See Susana Nuccetelli, "'Hispanics,' 'Latinos,' and 'Iberoamericans': Naming or Describing?" *Philosophical Forum* 32 (2001): 175–188. This work illustrates this feature of ethnic-group terms with the case of "Patagones" (literally, "big patas or feet"), from which the name of a Southern Argentinian region derives. The term was introduced to refer to the native Tehuelche: some Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century first described them as "giant people." Taking hold in the imaginative narratives of other explores, "Patagones" eventually caught on in the speech community in spite of later evidence that the Tehuelche were not giants. Referentialism can explain this, and also why "Hispanic," "Latino," and "Latin American"—all of which seem to have some initial associated misdescriptions—like "Patagones," successfully refer to certain groups of people.

24. See, e.g., Philip B. Corbett, "Hispanic? Latino? Or What?" *New York Times*, June 9, 2009; Luis Fajardo, "Should Hispanics Instead Be Called Latinos?" *BBC Mundo*, November 11, 2016; and Paul Taylor, Hugo Lopez, Jessica Martínez, and Gabriel Velasco, "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity," *Pew Research Center*, April 4, 2012.
25. Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," 69.
26. Ilan Stavans, "Life in the Hyphen," in *The Essential Ilan Stavans* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
27. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic-Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
28. Tammelleo, "Continuity and Change in Hispanic Identity."
29. J. Angelo Corlett, "Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy," in *Race or Ethnicity? On Black and Latino Identity*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 232.

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