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THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION: THE CASE OF LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT: *Latin American philosophy has long been concerned with its philosophical identity. In this paper I argue that the search for Latin American philosophical identity is motivated by a desire for recognition that largely hinges on its relationship to European thought. Given that motivations are seldom easily accessible, the essay comparatively draws on Africana and Native American metaphilosophical reflections. Such juxtapositions serve as a means of establishing how philosophical exclusions have themselves motivated and structured how Latin American philosophy has understood its own quest for philosophical identity. In closing, I gesture toward the possibilities of shifting the conversation away from what makes Latin American philosophy distinct toward one of praxis—what do we want Latin American philosophy to do.*

Keywords: *Africana philosophy, Latin American philosophy, metaphilosophy, Native American philosophy, recognition, rationality*

1. INTRODUCTION

Latin American philosophers have been deeply concerned with the status of Latin American philosophy; a concern phrased in the question: Does there exist a distinct Latin American philosophy? The question has garnered substantial attention, and philosophers and historians alike have heeded the call to respond. The responses largely engage the criteria by which to identify Latin American philosophy or take grave concern with the possibilities of its existence as an appropriate philosophical field. Although discussion about the search for philosophical identity have been ample, the motivations that structure the conversation are not always the focal point of discussion, a space where I contend some of the most fruitful analysis is found as Latin American philosophy continues to solidify as a field of study.

Latin American philosophy's search for philosophical identity has been foiled by a justificatory project. If Latin American philosophy exists, then it must be shown through the use of standards that are themselves already set up to duplicate conditions

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of exclusion. The exclusions of philosophy stem from its very own racialized intellectual frameworks, which can not necessarily be appreciated from the confines of the Latin American metaphilosophical conversation itself. The exclusionary heirlooms and practices of philosophy can be made visible through a number of measures, but in the context of this essay I want to suggest a comparative gesture by juxtaposing Africana and Native American philosophy with Latin American philosophy on the question of philosophical identity. The comparative gesture is important for a number of reasons. First, Africana philosophy has deeply explored the conditions by which people of African descent could have a philosophy given that they have been historically characterized as non-rational by western history (Outlaw 1988, 23). Thus, Africana philosophy directly shows how philosophy has been constructed through the deployment of racialized intellectual frameworks. Second, Native American philosophers have explored the tensions between the Western understanding of philosophy and the philosophical traditions of Indigenous peoples thus revealing how philosophy as a practice has been constructed through means of violent exclusion. I contend that in taking the aforementioned comparative contributions seriously we garner a clearer sense on the claim that how Latin American philosophy understands itself as an appropriate philosophical field hinges greatly relationships engendered by the colonial problem. As a result, the motivations for seeking philosophical identity are structured through a quest for recognition.

The goal of this paper is then twofold: (1) To juxtapose Latin American metaphilosophy and the Africana and Native American tradition in order to demonstrate the ways in which philosophy as a discipline has been constructed through exclusionary measures; and in light of such juxtapositions; (2) argue that said mechanisms of exclusion have themselves motivated and structured how Latin American philosophy has understood its own quest for philosophical identity. By drawing out moments of cross-disciplinary convergence, I demonstrate how the Latin American metaphilosophical debate can be dis-oriented and as a result enriched by paying closer attention to the motivations that frame its responses. The convergence with Africana and Native American philosophy puts into focus an explanatory pattern about the ways in which the process of defining a philosophical tradition is itself a political task about identity. As a result, we appreciate how the metaphilosophical debate of Latin American philosophy is informed by a desire for recognition through Euro-American philosophical standards that fails to account for the intellectual racialized frameworks of philosophy that always already question the rationality of non-Europeans.¹

¹ This paper makes use of terms linked with geography and largely associated with peoples: Latin American, Western, Native American, Indigenous, Black, African, etc. As such, the use of these terms is not merely intended to capture location, but rather the connection between people, place, and ideas about their capabilities to participate in philosophical productions. At stake here is not just the methodologies, but rather pre-methodological claims about who can participate in philosophical activity in the first place. Race is a key component of the conversation as it was and continues to be a determining factor in the valuation of ideas. Hence, when I refer to intellectual frameworks as racialized, I am specifically calling attention to the fact that the valuation of ideas in philosophy have

2. THE METAPHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE OF LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

2.1 AN EMPIRICAL, CLARIFICATORY, OR NORMATIVE INTERPRETATION?

The question “Does there exist a distinct Latin American philosophy?” can be interpreted as an empirical question, clarificatory, or a normative question. If understood as empirical, the question seeks to ascertain if there is philosophy in Latin America. The empirical interpretation requires identification of philosophical thought in the geographical area that is considered part of Latin America. It is undeniable that the response to the empirical interpretation is positive, there does exist philosophy in Latin America. One need only look to the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, which in 1939 initiates a bibliographic section dedicated to Latin American philosophy. For a more contemporary verification *The Blackwell Companion to Latin American Philosophy* neatly details the presence of different philosophical fields in Latin America. For instance, the essay titled “Phenomenology” by Nythamar de Oliveira tracks the emergence of phenomenology in Latin America and considers the future it has for contemporary issues.

At the crux between the interpretative and empirical interpretation of the metaphilosophical question stands the work of several scholars who have debated what makes a work Latin American or Latina/o/x. The conversation here focuses on discerning what term best captures the geographical scope of the region in question. For instance: Is the term ‘Hispanic’ more appropriate than ‘Latin American’, or is ‘Latin American’ more appropriate than ‘Ibero-American’? According to Susana Nuccetelli, these set responses can be categorized in two ways: semantically or pragmatically (Nuccetelli 2013, 3). The semantic problem arises when there is a lack of semantic criteria that can determine its referent (Nuccetelli 2013, 3). In the case of the ‘Latin America’, there is concern with determining how broad or narrow the term’s referent is supposed to be. For example: Does ‘Latin America’ include the Dominican Republic, Haiti, or Puerto Rico? On the other hand, the pragmatic problem arises when the use of a particular term is morally, politically, or socially contestable because of the negative connotations that the term may carry (Nuccetelli 2013, 3). For example: Is the term ‘Latino/a’ appropriate given the fact that it was an imposed term by the French as a way of advancing national interests with Latin and Catholic nations (Nuccetelli 2013, 5)? Similar concerns have been raised with respect to the use ‘Latinx’. Regardless of whether the response is semantic or pragmatic what these engagements with the metaphilosophical question reveal is an orientation toward the clarification of ethnic terms for the sake of their most appropriate use.

The normative interpretation of the question attempts to ascertain what is distinctly Latin American and appropriately philosophical in order to determine the

never been race-neutral, but always already racialized so as to mark the possibilities of the production of ideas through the negotiations of who counts as both human and rational.

parameters of what should or should not count as Latin American philosophy. On this interpretive schema it is necessary to determine what is meant by the term ‘philosophy’ and ‘Latin American’. It is this framework that informs the major interlocutors in the Latin American metaphilosophical debate: Risieri Frondizi, Jorge J. E. Gracia, Augusto Salazar Bondy, and Leopoldo Zea. Each theorist provides normative parameters for determining whether or not Latin American philosophy exists. The normative interpretation is by and large the most interesting, precisely because it is normative. However, I think it is important to note that there are a variety of normative issues at stake even in the empirical and clarificatory models of interpretation.² For the sake of this project, I will be focused on the normative questions raised by Latin American philosophers about what *ought* to count as appropriate Latin American philosophy. The focus also makes room for arguments about what we *ought* to do to ameliorate its situation. Finally, more contemporary scholarship on the question of the existence of Latin American philosophy assumes the normative dimensions of the question by virtue of the fact that their responses fit squarely within claims of how we *ought* to understand the tradition.

2.2 NORMATIVE PRESCRIPTIONS: DISTINCTLY LATIN AMERICAN AND APPROPRIATELY PHILOSOPHICAL

The question “Does a distinct Latin American philosophy exist?” is at its core a search for philosophical identity and in so doing makes a claim on the status of the field’s existence. In *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* Jorge J.E. Gracia created a taxonomy for the positions under the following headings: the culturalist, the universalist, the critical, and the ethnic positions (Gracia 2008, 133). The positions are united in their methodological aims, which seek to endorse specific parameters for determining the existence of a distinct Latin American philosophy.

The culturalist position holds that philosophy, like all other human activities, is materially situated and therefore, depends on specific cultural factors. All that is necessary for the culturalist position to hold is the presence of a culture that yields a philosophy. Therefore, Latin American philosophy will be the result of a Latin American culture. On this account, Latin American philosophy exists, in so far as a Latin American culture exists. Furthermore, any philosophy that is not authentically tied to Latin America, but rather imported or copied from another culture, does not constitute a genuine philosophy. The culturalist view is heavily informed by the perspectivist philosophy of Ortega y Gasset, which maintains the importance of circumstance for understanding the structure of our lived experience. His most illustrious quote, “Yo so yo y mi circunstancia” or “I am myself and my circumstance” from *Meditaciones del Quijote*, indicates the importance that Ortega y Gasset placed on the circumstances of our lives and their influence on who we are.

² To do an analysis of all of the normative dimensions of the metaphilosophical conversation is beyond the reach of this paper. What I do wish to note, however, is that what I am referring to as the normative is the presumed interpretation of the question that has gained the most traction and hence the focal point of the paper.

Circumstances permeate every facet of our being and influence our views (Gracia 2000, 134). It is for this reason that Jorge J.E. Gracia argues: “A philosophy that emphasizes the value of the particular and idiosyncratic lends itself quite easily to supporting the views of culturalist thinkers” (Gracia 2000, 134).

The most notable philosopher that holds the culturalist position is Leopoldo Zea. In “The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America” Zea delineates his culturalist position by using culture and circumstance as the necessary conditions for the existence of a genuine Latin American philosophy. He writes: “Latin American philosophy can exist if there is a Latin American culture from which this philosophy may take its issues. The existence of Latin American philosophy depends on whether or not there is a Latin American culture” (Zea 2004, 358). In this essay Zea not only defends the possibilities of Latin American philosophy, but also stages an argument for its distinctness from European traditions. For Zea, it is not just that Latin American philosophy exists, but rather that it exists as distinct from European philosophy. His position underscores the importance of culture as a distinguishing feature between Latin America and Europe; a feature that has historically been described as one of imitation hence not as uniquely or authentically Latin American. In response, Zea emphasizes the relational histories of Latin America with Europe through the use of parental metaphors. However, the historical relation to Europe does not define Latin America, but rather acts as a mechanism that links cultural theoretical productions without over-determining them. To this effect he writes: “From Europe we have received our cultural framework, what could be called our structure: language, religion, customs; in a word, our conception of life and world is European... We can no more deny that culture than we can deny our parents” (Zea 2004, 364). Of supreme concern for Zea is the development of a response to the claim that Latin American philosophy is merely an importation or appropriation of European thought to Latin America. In order to respond to this position, and to maintain that Latin American philosophy exists, Zea calls for a change in intellectual perspective. Latin Americans should stop viewing their philosophies as bad copies. A bad copy does not entail deficiency, but rather difference. Therefore, Latin American philosophy should not view itself as a deviant bad copy of a master European philosophy, but merely as a different type of philosophy. He writes:

To be a bad copy does not necessarily mean to be bad, but simply different. Perhaps our feeling of inferiority has made us consider bad anything that is our own just because it is not like, or equal, to its model. (Zea, 2004, 366)

Beyond indicating that Latin American philosophy should be understood as different, and not deviant, from European philosophical models, Zea also provides parameters for what he takes to be the most important philosophical possibilities that may result from the Latin American circumstance. Among these possibilities he includes: working through the European colonial relationship and locating the Latin American personality by defining its culture. These possibilities are important because they help develop the philosophical issues of Latin American culture. As he notes: “Another

task for this possible Latin American philosophy would be to continue to develop the philosophical issues of that culture, but most especially the issues that European philosophy regards as universal” (Zea 2004, 364). According to Zea, exploring abstract philosophical topics such as: being, knowledge, truth, and beauty from a Latin American circumstance provides the foundation for Latin American philosophy because of the way in which circumstance and culture permeate human activity. However, Zea insists that Latin American philosophers cannot view what is Latin American as an end in itself. Rather, he argues that Latin Americans need to do philosophy, and this will be sufficient, because their Latin American circumstance will inform their positions: “Simply by being Latin American, philosophers will create a Latin American philosophy in spite of their own efforts at depersonalization. Any attempt to the contrary will be anything but philosophy” (Zea 2004, 368).

Counterposed to the culturalist position is the universalist position. The universalist view holds that philosophy explores universally applicable concepts. In a very similar vein to the way in which we understand science as a universally applicable practice, philosophy is supposed to explore issues that are not particularized or idiosyncratic, but rather hold across space and time. According to the universalist, just as it makes little sense to talk about a Chinese science or a U.S. science, it does not make sense to speak of a Latin American philosophy or a French philosophy. For the universalist, philosophy, as a discipline, can not acquire peculiar characteristics that may make it nationally, socially, or ethnically tied to a particular social group (Gracia 2000, 133). National or geographical descriptive terms used in philosophy, such as “Latin American” or “German,” are distinctions of a particular time and place that serve to highlight historical moments but are not considered to be part of the discipline itself (Gracia 2000, 133). As a result, the universalist position entails that a peculiarly Latin American philosophy does not exist. Indeed, it could never exist in so far as this view “sees an intrinsic incompatibility between the nature of philosophy as a universal discipline of learning and such particular products as culture. (Gracia 2000, 134)

The most notable figure that maintains the universalist position is Risieri Frondizi. In “Is there an Ibero-American Philosophy?” Frondizi normatively prescribes the parameters for philosophy. The normative ascription is presented by contrasting philosophy to *weltanschauung* (worldview). He argues that every person has a *weltanschauung*, that he describes as “spontaneous philosophy, naïve, quite the opposite of critical philosophy which is the result of mature and conscious reflection” (Frondizi 1949, 345). The difference between worldview and philosophy is important to Frondizi. Philosophy, he maintains, can be contrasted from aesthetic, political, and social issues, which he argues have been a problematic central focus of philosophy. Hence, from his argumentative perspective philosophy, in Latin America in particular, has been subordinated to non-philosophical interests (Frondizi 1949, 346). The defining focus of philosophy is thus presented in the following fashion: “There will be philosophy when we reflect in a purely philosophical context, without putting such activity to the service of political or literary or any other interests and concerns” (Frondizi 1949, 347). Frondizi’s normative parameters of what is appropriately

philosophical are further put to the test when he examines the corpus of Latin American philosophy from what the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* has published under their bibliographic section on philosophy. He affirms that a mere ten percent of what has been published has any claim to philosophical originality (Frondizi 1949, 347). Furthermore, he argues that most of the work published has been a mere reconsideration of European philosophical concepts thus making no new additional original contributions.

As part of his normative prescription for what philosophy ought to be, Frondizi examines the way in which philosophy has been practiced in Latin America. He expresses grave concern with the fact that the Latin American philosophical tradition is rooted in imitative practices of European philosophical thought. Citing the influence of Ortega y Gasset, which runs central to the culturalist stance, Frondizi argues that his influence has detrimentally affected the way in which Latin American philosophy has sought to create itself. On the one hand, he argues that his influence allowed Latin America to develop its imitative practices by focusing on the importance of circumstance. However, this fact is not without consequence. The problem with the concept of circumstance, Frondizi argues, is that it is extremely ambiguous (Frondizi 1949, 352). Any attempt to ground philosophical positions in circumstance or perspective will be flawed. Therefore, as he argues with regard to the efforts of Ortega y Gasset's followers: "There was in such attempts an error of perspective. Philosophy is occupied with the 'totality' of being as such. And we are ill able to contemplate this totality with a provincial viewpoint" (Frondizi 1949, 353). In response, Frondizi maintains that Latin Americans must do philosophy from the human situation, not from the starting point of a nationally founded situation, such as an Argentinian perspective. This is the essence of Frondizi's universalist position. He maintains that philosophy should be universally applicable. Thus, he positions himself against the perspectivism that grounds the culturalist stance earlier described and maintains that there cannot be a Latin American philosophy.

The third position is the critical position. The critical view also holds that Latin American philosophy has failed to create itself, but for reasons that differ from those proposed by the universalist stance. The proponents of the critical view argue that philosophy in Latin America has been subservient to a desire to support the status quo and for the benefit of elite social groups (Gracia 2000, 135). According to this position, the condition of Latin American philosophy continues to be haunted by its colonial history. As a result, Latin American philosophy continues to be underdeveloped because it continues to be subservient to ideological powers. The uniqueness of the critical position comes from its use of critique as a starting point. It diagnoses what is wrong with Latin American philosophy and prescribes a solution for superseding its current predicament. What Latin American philosophy might look like beyond its current conditions is left open. Proponents of this position diverge in their perspectives on the future of the field. For instance, some argue that, once ideological subservience has been overcome, Latin American philosophy will exist as a product of a distinct Latin American perspective, hence adopting a culturalist view with respect to the future (Gracia 2000, 136).

The most prominent proponent of the critical position is Augusto Salazar Bondy. In “The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Philosophic Thought” Salazar Bondy traces the history of philosophy in Latin America. He takes the conquest of the Americas as a historical starting point, thereby excluding the pre-Columbian era as part of the history of Latin American philosophy. Salazar Bondy argues that his point of departure is supported by the fact that there is not sufficient data to make the claim that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas had any philosophy. He notes that what we know to be Hispanic or Latin America is a community that did not exist in the Pre-Columbian age. In fact, there was no cultural or social political integration that could have yielded a community similar to what we term Hispanic America (Salazar Bondy 2004, 381). Therefore, “the historic community which we customarily call Hispanic America did not exist before the sixteenth century, and it is only beginning with this century that we can find cultural products that are definitely philosophical” (Salazar Bondy 2004, 381).

Given this starting point, Salazar Bondy traces the history of Hispanic philosophy by citing the presence of scholasticism, positivism, Marxism, and German and French philosophy. Latin American philosophy, according to Salazar Bondy, is the product of the importation of foreign doctrines, predominantly from Europe (Salazar Bondy 2004, 387).

To review the process of Hispanic American philosophy is to relate the passing of Western philosophy *through* our countries, or to narrate European philosophy *in* Hispanic America. It is not to tell the history of a natural philosophy *of* Hispanic America. (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388)

In order to demonstrate the predicament of philosophy in Latin America, Salazar Bondy identifies seven central characteristics of Hispanic American philosophy. The first is an imitative mode of thought, which in Hispanic American philosophy has taken the form of adopting preexisting schools of thought and importing them to Latin America (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388). Thinking is done through theoretical molds that are shaped and informed by the Western thought (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388). The second characteristic is universal receptivity. Beyond importation and imitation, Latin American philosophy is plagued by an indiscriminate incorporation of varying schools of thought, particularly those schools of thought that have gained a reputation in some European countries (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388). As a result, the lack of a critical attitude has, according to Salazar Bondy, been taken for a Hispanic American virtue (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388). Third, Salazar Bondy points to the absence of any definitive tendency or characteristic as a defining feature of Hispanic American philosophy. He argues that because we can not find one defining characteristic of Latin American philosophy “the only alternative is to count as a distinctive character precisely the absence of definition” (Salazar Bondy 2004, 388). Consistent with his previous characterizations, the fourth feature he identifies is the absence of original contributions. Following his claim of universal importation, Salazar Bondy does not see any original philosophical contributions that could be

counted as part of a distinct Hispanic American school of thought (Salazar Bondy 2004, 389). The lack of philosophical originality has produced a sense of self-awareness that understands Latin Americans as appropriators of Western thought that lack originality (Salazar Bondy 2004, 389). The state of affairs generates a deep sense of intellectual frustration, which Salazar Bondy identifies as the fifth characterization. The sixth feature that he identifies is the distance between those who practice philosophy and the community at large. The uncritical importation and receptivity of ideas has created a distance between ideas and the community they are intended to reflect. Under ideal conditions, “when an elaborate intellectual creation is genuine, it reflects the conscience of a community, finding in it profound resonance especially through its ethical and political derivations” (Salazar Bondy 2004, 389). Hence, the distance between ideas and reality creates a dissonance between the non-philosophical community and philosophers revealing the problems with uncritical importation and receptivity. The seventh, and final feature, dovetails with the sixth. Salazar Bondy maintains that the schema of uncritical receptivity is one that can be identified in a plurality of countries throughout Hispanic America (Salazar Bondy 2004, 389). Therefore, in order to better understand why these features, seem to be applicable in all of these places, it is essential to look at the reality that links all of them: the culture and history (Salazar Bondy 2004, 389).

The cultural historical reality that unites Latin America is one of dependence on centers of economic and political power. Although, as Salazar Bondy notes, these conditions are not unique to Latin America, but are shared by what has been termed the Third World (Salazar Bondy 395). In order to explain this predicament, Salazar Bondy looks to the concept of underdevelopment and domination. He notes: “Underdeveloped countries present an aggregate of basically negative characteristics which, one way or the other, are related to dependent bonds with other centers of economic and political power” (Salazar Bondy 2004, 395). Hispanic America has been constructed in relationship to industrial powers-- Spain, England, or the United States—that have to a large extent directed the activities of the nations that comprise Hispanic America according to their own interests (Salazar Bondy 2004, 395). Ultimately, Salazar Bondy’s diagnosis of Hispanic America and its philosophical productions are characterized by the presence of a culture of domination, and it is this culture that has and continues to contribute to the underdevelopment of genuine Hispanic American philosophy (Salazar Bondy 2004, 395). Yet, not all is lost with Salazar Bondy’s depiction of the status of Latin American philosophy. In fact, Latin American philosophy has the possibility of being authentic. Amidst its inauthenticity, it can become aware of its negative condition in order to recuperate and move past its predicament. Consequently, the philosophical future envisioned by Salazar Bondy is filled with possibilities through the destruction of the negative features that stem from culture of domination (Salazar Bondy 2004, 397). From destruction Hispanic American philosophy might recuperate itself, become independent of domination, and strive toward the development of a philosophy that is “both theory and application, conceived and executed in our own fashion, according to our own standards and qualities” (Salazar Bondy 2004, 398).

The fourth and final position of the normative views is the ethnic position. On a basic level, the ethnic position describes Latin American philosophy as an ethnic philosophy. According to this view, the necessary condition for Latin American philosophy will be a Latina/o/x or Latin American ethnos that is held together by familial historical relations. The most notable figure that holds this position is Jorge J.E. Gracia, though widely published in a series of sources³, his central claims can be found *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity*.

The ethnic position proposed by Gracia is grounded in the familial historical understanding of Latina/o/x identity. Gracia describes Latinas/os/x identities as identities that belong to an ethnos. Ethne are sub groups of human beings that satisfy the following conditions (Gracia 2008, 17). First, an ethnos is a group of people tied together by a common ethnicity across generations, which entails that a historical component that ties it together. Second, ethne are organized as families and break down into extended families. Third, ethne are united through historical relations that produce certain characteristics or features that serve to identify members of the ethnic groups and to distinguish them from other groups (Gracia 2008, 17). Given these criteria, the category Latina/o/x may be described as an extended historical family whose members may not have consistent identifiable properties, although the historical connections that tie them together give rise to a set of characteristics that may be common to some members of the group and serve to distinguish it from other social groups (Gracia 2008, 18). Gracia's view further distinguishes itself from positions on identity that rely on the consistency of first order properties, or common essences, like phenotypes or genotypes, to tie individuals (Gracia 2008, 18). Rather, as Gracia describes it:

Latino and Latino groups are tied by the same kind of thing that ties the members of a family. We are related, as a mother is to a daughter, and grandparents to grandchildren. The notion of family does not require genetic ties. (Gracia 2008, 18)

Over time, the relationships forged through different types of social familial encounters create an ethnic group. In the case of Latina/o/x ethnicity the historical relations were initiated through the moment of contact between Spain and the Americas. Hence, the ethnic marker 'Latina/o/x' is historical and, given its foundation in familial like structures of relationships, it does not preclude the possibility of multiple identities because there are no fixed set of properties that tie the ethnos together (Gracia, 2008, 22).

According to Gracia's position, Latin American philosophy exists insofar as the ethnic term Latina/o/x exists.⁴ As the aforementioned culturalist, critical, and

³ For instance: Gracia, Jorge J.E. "Identity and Latin American Philosophy." *Blackwell Companion to Latin American Philosophy*. Ed. Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, Otávio Bueno. Wiley: Massachusetts, 2007. 253-269

⁴ It is important to note that for Gracia Latin American philosophy is part of the larger category of Latina/o philosophy, which ethnically encompasses a larger variety of contexts, experiences, and historical circumstances.

universalist positions, Gracia's view normatively prescribes what should or should not count as Latin American philosophy. Yet, he departs from the previous positions by primarily focusing on developing an accurate conception of the ethnic label 'Latin American'. He does not pay as much attention to the definition of philosophy per se. He briefly touches on the subject in *Latinos in America* where he states: "the aim of philosophy is to develop a view of the world, or any of its parts, which seeks to be accurate, consistent, comprehensive, and supported by sound evidence" (Gracia 2008, 188). Moreover, he claims that philosophy can be distinguished from other disciplines insofar as it is more general, where as other disciplines restrict their research to particular subjects and methods (Gracia 2008, 189). Second, philosophy is distinct from other disciplines because its areas of investigation are "uniquely philosophical such as ethics, logic, and metaphysics" (Gracia 2008, 189). Finally, Gracia maintains that philosophy is distinct in that it is not merely a descriptive enterprise (Gracia 2008, 189). Rather, philosophy involves interpretation and evaluation (Gracia 2008, 189). For Gracia defining philosophy is not as much of a concern as conceptually working out what it means to be part of an ethnicity. As a result, he provides a working sense of the aims of philosophy but does not dedicate as much attention to defending this definition.

Although Gracia is not as concerned with the definition of philosophy, the ethnic position does leave room open for the inclusion of texts that would otherwise not be considered philosophical through the use of dominant standards of philosophy as exemplified by college curricula and academic journals. The position allows the inclusion and exclusion of texts through the use of internal and external factors. Gracia argues:

Membership in an ethnos is contextual and historical, and what counts as something belonging to the ethnos, such as its philosophy, is not determined exclusively from the outside; it is negotiated between the outside and the inside, and it is determined for particular times and places, just as ethnic identity is. (Gracia, 2008, 142)

Hence, the ethnic position by appreciating the negotiation between interior and exterior factors leaves some room open for Latin American philosophy to arrive at its own model of what counts as philosophical.

2.3 NORMATIVE MEASURES: ORIENTATIONS AROUND EUROPEAN THOUGHT

By heeding the call of the metaphilosophical question the positions just described share methodological concern for normatively prescribing what is distinctly Latin American and appropriately philosophical. The culturalist and the ethnic position affirm that Latin American philosophy exists, and the universalist and critical position deny its possibility. Methodologically, each position arrives at their conclusions by prescribing the conditions that ought to determine the existence or non-existence of field. More contemporarily, the New Skeptics as Susana Nuccetelli has termed them,

have similarly reflected on the conditions of a Latin American philosophical tradition underscored by a general commitment to the claim that Latin America lacks stable philosophical traditions and communities of the sort most commonly found in the major centers of Western philosophy (Nuccetelli 2013, 11).

Furthermore, the taxonomies just described largely exclude the branch of Latin American philosophy commonly termed philosophy(ies) of liberation, which carries with it an important critical metaphilosophical dimension and draws on some of the same figures earlier discussed. The philosophy of liberation defines itself through a critique of Eurocentrism, philosophical dependency, and inauthenticity (Mendieta 2016). On the metaphilosophical level it offers a critical view of colonized thinking with an eye toward epistemic ruptures that critique Euro-American views about philosophy and thus can create more liberatory conditions from which to do philosophical work. Hence, it is appropriate to describe philosophies of liberation as counter-philosophical with a heightened degree of self-reflexiveness (Mendieta 2016). Citing the work of Salazar Bondy and Zea, philosophy of liberation demarcates an important part of history. Zea and Bondy set the stage for the agenda of philosophy of liberation as they critically engage metaphilosophical concerns rooted in reflections about what it means to do philosophy from the Americas (Mendieta 2016). Philosophy(ies) of liberation is subsequently understood as having a commitment to the idea that all philosophizing is done from an existential situation and at the service of liberatory praxis for *el pueblo* or the people. Notably, this branch of Latin American philosophy takes on a critical starting point but given its commitment to critique its conversations are internal as it is committed to the particularities raised by self-awareness.

If a question of this sort has engendered so much discussion, it seems then to pick at the heart of deeper questions about the identity not just of a philosophical field but of the people; that is the community it speaks about. In this context, I think gestures of juxtaposition with other ethnically identified fields prove insightful, as Africana and Native American philosophy not only have asked similar questions but also provide different insights into what is at stake in asking a question of this sort. In other words, the juxtaposition between Latin American philosophy and Africana and Native American philosophy on this question illuminates the ways in which Latin American philosophy is participating in a broader pattern of thinking that reveals the relationship between the rational subject posited by philosophy and the racial colonial underside that makes the subject of philosophy possible in the first place. I contend that such efforts of juxtaposition give us further resources to think through the metaphilosophical concerns of Latin American philosophy more broadly.

The framework used to establish the possibilities of Latin American philosophy hinges on the role that European thought plays in structuring what counts as philosophical. The culturalist stance directly attends to a desire for distinction from Europe grounded in the concept of circumstance. The universalist position reveals that Latin American philosophy has been purely imitative of European thought, and more pointedly, the idea of having a nationally bound philosophical tradition is itself problematic given the nature of philosophy. The critical position directly engages the

role of European thought to the point of characterizing Latin American philosophy as purely imitative, but not without recourse to overcoming its situation. However, the shift away from theoretical underdevelopment will be found after Latin American philosophy overcomes its situation of dependency generated by colonial domination--a colonial domination that is generated by conditions in relationship to Europe. The ethnic position although not directly tackling European thought, echoes concerns with respect to the shared history that links Latina/o/x and Latin American ethnos to a colonial moment that forms the conditions for the ethnos that is necessary for a Latin American philosophy.

So, the relationship to European thought stands at the crossroads of identity for Latin American philosophy. As philosophers of liberation have noted, this crux is a critical one and extends into concerns with Euro-American philosophy more broadly (Mendieta 2016). The solutions, however, indicate that Latin American philosophy has very few options. Latin American philosophy can *justify* its unique existence by denying European philosophical influence. It can *deny* the existence of Latin American philosophy by making use of European philosophical standards for justification, or they can attempt to navigate a difficult colonial history by defining the ethnic term, but not directly tackling the conditions for desiring distinctiveness. It should then be clear that at stake in this discussion is a concern over the relationship between Europe and Latin America—a point that philosophers of liberation have consistently noted, but whose solutions have largely focused on self-critique (Mendieta 2016). It is for this reason that I suggest a look toward other philosophical traditions have considered the role of Euro-American thought in the development of their respective fields. Specifically, Africana philosophy has drawn attention to the relationship between rationality, race, and the development of philosophical traditions. Therefore, a comparative look toward Africana philosophy helps to illuminate the methodological framework that makes the desire for Latin American philosophy's recognition a key feature in the debate and further motivates the desire to for distinctiveness.

3. THE RACIALIZED RATIONAL SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY

Metaphilosophical concerns of Africana⁵ philosophy find entry into contemporary Western philosophical debates as a result of arguments advanced by Europeans about Africans. Specifically, Europeans made claims that certain modes of thought were

⁵ This article understands Africana philosophy as an umbrella term under which we can situate the traditions of Africans, as well as, descendants of Africans (Outlaw 1998, 24). It encompasses African-American philosophy as well as African philosophy. However, they are not synonymous. The term African denotes the circumstance(s) of the African continent, whereas the term African-American denotes a relation to a history of African-descended people and their forced encounters with the Americas. While there is certainly overlap to be found in arguments and methods amongst these traditions, it is important to highlight the diversity that comprises Africana philosophy so as to not homogenize what is a very diverse philosophical tradition given that Africana philosophy is itself constituted by diversity (Outlaw 1998, 29).

unique to African people and could thus be regarded as philosophy (Outlaw 1998, 23). However, the context of these discussions were always already structured by the domination and exploitation of African peoples by Europeans. European colonial domination and violence was, and in many ways continues to be, rationalized through the use of strategies that draw on ranking order distinctions of people rooted in racism (Outlaw 1998, 23). Hence, to many Europeans the claim that Africans could philosophize was received as nothing short of a bold statement, given that the racist rationale of colonialism necessarily understood African descended peoples as subordinate subjects to the “civilized” people of Europe (Outlaw 1998, 23).

In 1945 the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels published *La Philosophie Bantoue*, in which he argued that philosophy exists in the Bantu culture of the lower Congo. Primarily drawing from observations of behavior, customs, and language of the Luba people (an ethnic group that is part of the Bantu family), Tempels held that Bantu philosophy can be extrapolated from the lived experience of the Luba (Imbo 1998, 8). The implications of Tempels’ work brought under scrutiny the assumption of the non-rationality of African people that at its core questioned the concept of the rational subject posited by enlightenment thinkers. The rational subject was never intended to include Africans. Consistent with a colonial epistemic lens, rationality was not an attribute that Africans and their decedents shared with Europeans. Hence, the metaphilosophical conversations of Africana philosophy have always been oriented around a criticism of the rational subject the status of humanity and thereby rationality were concomitantly denied to African descended peoples. Yet, beyond this critical starting point stands a much larger conversation about how to define or distinguish the philosophical practices of Africans-- a debate that takes interest in the question: “Given the global dispersal of African peoples and the subsequent development of regional (e.g. Caribbean), more or less complex local-national (e.g. African-American), and nation-state groupings (“Nigerian”, “Kenyan”), can we speak of “Africana philosophy” in a cogent way?” (Outlaw 1998, 24).

In the context of these conversations, similar to the case of Latin America, the identity of Africa and its relationship to philosophy are put into question. However, Africana philosophy is distinctive in its explicit criticism of the western philosophical rational subject as its starting point. Although the culturalist and critical position as well as the broader scope of philosophy of liberation take concern with the implication of philosophical hierloosm from Europe that generate inauthenticity, the participation in the Western philosophical project by virtue of the status of racialized intellectual personhood is not at the foreground of discussions. Latin American philosophy’s metaphilosophical debate has not taken a direct concern with debunking the myth of the non-rational Latin American. I suspect that this is partially due to the fact that the Enlightenment thinkers never directly identified people from Latin America in their work as lacking rationality. Furthermore, the presence of different colonial legacies makes Latin America’s racial formations distinct. The racial tensions that exist in Latin America as a result of the presence of different races (including Black) have fueled different discourses about race, rationality, and the possibilities of philosophy that is seldom addressed in the metaphilosophical debates

of Latin American philosophy. Hence, I maintain that the critique of the European rational subject is extremely important to consider for Latin American philosophy as it directly and unwaveringly maintains the claim that appropriate philosophical subjects are racialized and engendered through hierarchies of valuation that stem from the colonial project.

The question of who counts as Latin American has been and continues to be a central question of Latin American philosophy. However, the question of racial and ethnic identity in the case of Latin American philosophy takes on a different form because of the multiplicity of races and ethnicities present in the region. For instance, the racial concepts of *meztizaje* and *mulataje* have historically played a central role in the formation of Latin American national identities (Rahier 2003, 42). In some instances these senses of racial mixing have downplayed the prevalence of racism by advocating notions of racial harmony while simultaneously marginalizing certain identities that do not fit the hybridization model (Rahier 2003, 42). Subsequently, the configuration of national ideologies through the use of tropes like *meztizaje*, have and continue to problematically exclude or dismiss Black subjects as either outside of the nation or completely assimilated in its formation. As a result, Black subjects have seldom been a direct concern for Latin American metaphilosophical debates insofar as the term 'Latin American' has never been taken to be racially equivalent with blackness.

The manner in which the metaphilosophical debate has paid attention to the racial historical dimensions of what makes intellectual productions appropriately philosophical suggests that Latin American philosophy continues to grapple with the colonial ghosts that inform it without considering the way in which its colonial legacies shape and inform how it understands itself, and how it approaches its metaphilosophical concerns. However, this is not to discount the scholarly efforts of liberation philosophy(ies) meta critique about how we produce and reproduce knowledge, but rather it is to augment the discussion by stretching the internal self-critique to broader concerns that impact many non-European peoples. Non-rationality, in the history of Western philosophy, has been attributed to Africans because they were not seen as fully human (Outlaw 1998, 24). Yet, the predicament of Latin America has never been so straightforward, and here lays the problem. Regardless of the presence of Europeans in Latin America, its inhabitants will never carry the badge of being strictly European, no matter how much they desire it. The racial overtones of the situation entail, that although not all Latin Americans may identify as Black or even associate their identities with blackness, they are nevertheless engaged in a racialized framework, whereby their intellectual capacity is put into question simply because they are non-European and can be associated with Blackness. In other words, the links with blackness and the historical relationship between race, rationality, and personhood help to foreground why the distinction from Euro-America is a concern, and an important concern, in the first place. The metaphilosophical debate of African philosophy helps to understand the impact of a colonial-intellectual framework on the possibilities of a philosophical tradition. In light of these considerations the fact that the Latin American metaphilosophical

debate is motivated from a position of doubt that requires justification makes more sense insofar as the relationship between race and assumed intellectual capacity, although not a central concern, frames the viability of the conversation, thus yielding doubt over its existence.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition reveals the fact that in asking what is distinct about Latin American philosophy, we are also inquiring into the possibilities of a philosophy from a racialized framework where intellectual (rational) capacity is already at stake. In light of this, the debate's structure around justification or denial is understandable insofar as the starting point is not just doubt about a distinct Latin American philosophy, but doubt over whether the geo-political terrain can even sustain the possibilities of philosophical thought as dictated by European philosophical standards. The presumption of doubt that frames the debate brings to the fore the fact that there is more at stake than a definitional project. Rather, it draws attention to the fact that the rationality of the non-European is always already in question (Monahan 2005, 17). Hence, the framework underlines the impact of European thought on the identity of Latin American philosophy. The pressing concern is how to understand and manage the role of Euro-American thought in the structuring of the identity of Latin American philosophy.

4. THE INDISPENSABLE AND INADEQUATE: LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY & EUROPEAN THOUGHT

There is an intimate relationship between European thought and what counts as philosophical. As the juxtaposition with African philosophy demonstrates, what counts as philosophical is linked to who counts as a rational. However, the solution to the problem of European thought is not as simple as creating a critical distance from Europe. Latin American philosophy's predicament is situated within a framework that already presumes a problematic relationship to Europe noticeable in its concern with imitation, lack of authenticity, domination, and dependency. Hence, the conditions of justification or denial of Latin American philosophy's existence is set up against the backdrop of Euro-American thought.

For instance, European thought as Salazar Bondy notes is present in the philosophy of Latin America. As he traces a history of philosophy, he makes note of the presence of topics like scholasticism, French philosophy, and Marxism, to name a few. Moreover, Zea's general concerns with Latin American philosophy have to do with finding conditions for authenticity and distinctness from Europe in order to make the claim that Latin American philosophy is not predicated on imitative practices. European thought, at this point, is part of the history of Latin American philosophy, and what Latin American philosophers in this context are reflecting on is the management of its role in the formation and structure of the tradition in a way that either preserves or eradicates the traditions possibilities.

European thought is woven into the history of Latin American philosophy. The problem at hand involves the development of a methodology that appreciates the presence of European thought without making it a determining feature, and on this

point the scholarship of Dipesh Chakrabarty proves useful. In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Chakrabarty discusses the inheritance of European thought and its impact on the development of scholarship that works from the margins. He argues that concepts derived from the European Enlightenment are both unavoidable and indispensable (Chakrabarty 2000, 4). The concepts of the Enlightenment, of which we are heir to today, have left a mark on our contemporary understanding of politics (Chakrabarty 2000, 5). They are not mere conceptual relics of times past. The task, argues Chakrabarty, involves recognizing that European thought is both indispensable and inadequate for understanding the contemporary experiences of non-Western nations (Chakrabarty 2000, 16). He advocates that we “provincialize Europe,” which he takes to mean the task of exploring how European thought, which is now everyone’s heritage, can be thought through from the margins (Chakrabarty 2000, 16).

In light of Chakrabarty’s claims I would add that part of the conceptual heirloom that is derived from the Enlightenment is the way in which we understand philosophy. Philosophy has been and continues to be defined through European philosophical norms. This fact is most noted in the earlier reflections garnered from Africana philosophy with regards to the status of the black subject, rationality, and the impossibilities of a philosophy. The conclusion that Chakrabarty draws, however, differs from the strategy that Latin American philosophers have deployed for dealing with European thought as well as European standards of what makes something philosophical. Following this line of thought, Latin American philosophy benefits from these reflections because it does not require that we dispense with European thought or entirely accept it as part of the traditions’ general identity. After all, the metaphilosophical debate of Latin American philosophy is at its center a search for identity. Therefore, European thought must be considered as influential in the formation of that identity given the history of the tradition and the historical relations between Latin American and Europe. However, this does not entail that European thought determine the identity of the tradition. Latin American philosophy can still remain distinct from European philosophy while recognizing its influence.

The work that remains to be done involves contextualizing European thought within Latin American philosophy in a manner that sheds light on its impact on the circumstance of Latin American philosophy. I suggest we view European thought as indispensable to understanding Latin American philosophy because it has been so central and present in the formation of the tradition. It is for this very reason that the metaphilosophical positions are concerned with Europe. However, we should not forget that European thought remains inadequate for understanding Latin American philosophy insofar as the tradition entails more than just its relationship to Europe; a point illuminated by the motivations for engaging in the discussion in the first place. The sense of inadequacy generated by European philosophical norms for Latin American philosophy motivates the desire for recognition and authenticity that is so prevalent in the discussions about the distinctness of the tradition. However, rather

than fall into the traps of a bind of justification⁶ I think it is important to consider what the project of European contextualization does for Latin American philosophy. In other words, I suggest we consider what it would mean to contextualize Europe from the framework of the metaphilosophical debate of Latin American philosophy?

5. WHAT DO WE WANT LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY TO DO?

By way of solution that can speak to the project of contextualizing Europe, I suggest that we shift the query structure of the debate. I propose that instead of questioning whether Latin American philosophy exists we alternatively consider: “What do we want Latin American philosophy to do?” Part of the larger problem that I see with the metaphilosophical debate is the way in which its concerns with European philosophical standards can stifle the development of thought that takes direct concern with issues that affect Latin Americans and Latinx peoples both in the U.S. and abroad. In this vein, it is insightful to once again turn toward Africana philosophy. With respect to Africana philosophy, Tommy J. Curry has notably argued that to the extent that the field of Africana philosophy continues to define its validity through its convergence with Euro-American authors the field will become derelict as it misguides the development of thought that can tackle issues that are relevant to the lives of Africana people (Curry 2011, 314). He diagnoses Africana philosophy with having failed to inquire seriously into the culturally specific epistemologies of African-descended peoples at the service of reading Black thought into the continuities of the Euro-American tradition (Curry 2011, 317). More pointedly, Curry takes concern with the fact that what counts as knowledge and subsequently derived philosophical status must find its grounding in a Euro-American philosophical tradition. He writes: “Black knowledge is only knowledge insofar as it converges with a higher anthropological order established in the history of European philosophy” (Curry 2011, 321). Of great insight from Curry’s reflections is the way in which Euro-American philosophy functions as the arbiter of the philosophical and just as importantly the way concerns of other culturally and racially different systems of thought subsequently made legible only to the extent that they can be framed through Euro-American philosophical histories (Curry 2011, 321).

Although the histories of Latin American philosophy and Africana philosophy are different, at times intersecting as a result of colonial histories, the kernel of truth remains that the epistemic heirloom of Euro-American philosophy will produce similar patterns of exclusion. It is for this reason that metaphilosophical reflections are important given that how we define Latin American philosophy will affect how

⁶ The culture of justification of philosophy has been explored by Kristie Dotson in “How is this Paper Philosophy?” in which she argues that philosophy manifests a culture of justification whereby legitimation is privileged according to some presumed commonly held justifying norms, which serve to amplify existing practices of exceptionalism and sense of incongruence thus making it very difficult to engender conditions of diversity (6). When I speak of justification in this essay I am referring to the norms of justification that require legitimation that exceed mere philosophical questioning, and assume commonly held norms, which are not in fact common and serve only to re-inscribe exclusion.

way the field gets produced and reproduced. Following, Curry's critique, it strikes me that we need a completely new definition of Latin American philosophy that targets the lived material conditions that generate particular experiences that are distinct to Latin American and Latinx identities. We need a better definition of what we want Latin American philosophy to be, which will certainly involve how we handle European thought, but nevertheless we should focus on philosophically elaborating conditions that we take to reflect on what it means to be from or tied to Latin America. The shift can be achieved if we start from the consideration of what we want Latin American philosophy to be as opposed to the possibilities of its existence. Here, the starting point takes for granted that Latin American philosophy does exist and refocuses energy on elaborating its goal and method. The shift from 1) what is distinct to 2) what we want Latin American philosophy to do enables a conversation that does not reproduce the dynamics of justification and denial that have characterized the debate thus far, but rather reorients it in a fashion that can account for the role that Europe and the U.S. have played in constructing Latin American philosophy without over-determining. Within Latin American philosophy, liberation philosophies are the most aligned with concerns that affect the people and emphasize the way thought must be linked to liberatory praxis. Hence, I am not suggesting that the shift toward reflections on the doing of Latin American philosophy are themselves novel, but rather trying to highlight the ways a look out toward other fields that have taken similar concerns have set firm ground from which to do the work of self-critique without necessarily reproducing problematic justificatory frameworks. African philosophy should give us pause to consider who the subject of Latin American philosophy is and continues to be today, and how even in our productions of self-critique we might reproduce the very same exclusions we seek to denounce as Latin American philosophy strives to make itself legible in Euro-American philosophical histories.

A further insightful comparative gesture can be drawn from the reflections of Native American philosophy, which not only holds firm in its existence, but also takes concern with the possibilities of articulating its positions from within a philosophical establishment that has been and continues to be hostile to Native people and their thought. Vine Deloria Jr. opens his essay "Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples" by discussing the status of academic philosophy by stating:

People of American Indian descent are now seeking admission to one of the most respected and hallowed intellectual enterprises of Western civilization—philosophy. This last bastion of white male supremacy does not admit members easily and the roadblocks ahead are of such magnitude that it is doubtful that very much will be accomplished. (Deloria Jr. 2004, 3).

Similarly, Marilyn Notah Verney in her essay "On Authenticity" discusses the challenges that derive from the radically distinct frameworks offered by Native American philosophy that are at times incommensurable with traditional Euro-American philosophical frameworks (Notah Verney 2004, 136). She notes "American

Indian philosophy is and always has been contrary to much of traditional Euro-American philosophy” (Notah Verney 2004, 136). The tension detrimentally impacts Native people in philosophy because the study of traditional Western philosophy entails the loss of Native identity. Native philosophy and Native identity are threaded together whereby what it means to be Native American is bound by the beliefs and teachings of American Indian philosophy (Notah Verney 2004, 136). Moreover, the identity of Native people within the Western philosophical establishment is often understood as located in a time past, a time of primitive people. Indeed, as Deloria Jr. points out, “the stereotype of primitive people anchors the whole edifice of Western social thought” (Deloria Jr. 2004, 3). For example, consider the dominant social contract philosophers John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, who articulated the idea of the formation of a social contract that was preceded by a hypothetical stage wherein primitive people existed in a state of nature (Deloria Jr. 2004, 3). Ideas about the progress of civil society remain largely unexamined in philosophy, and “the attitude of most philosophers is that American Indians represent that stage of human development in which superstition and ignorance reigned supreme” (Deloria Jr. 2004, 3). Furthermore, the primitive, which is equated with the Indigenous, continues to be conceived as pre-scientific (Deloria Jr. 2004, 4). Thus, the possibilities of philosophical exchange between Native American philosophy and Euro-American philosophy is frail because of the way in which the Western philosophical establishment has structured itself through the exclusion of what is understood to be primitive and pre-scientific, and thus associated with Native peoples.

In contrast to Native American philosophy, Latin American philosophy does not directly regard the Western philosophical framework as incommensurable with a Latin American philosophical one. Quite to the contrary, Latin American metaphilosophy tends to operate within the Western philosophical frame by using its methods, terms, and subjects. Henceforth, a location of critique by some authors who find Latin American philosophy too bound by European thought (e.g. Salazar Bondy). So, it is not the case that Latin American philosophy’s methods and understanding of topics stands in opposition to Western philosophy, at least not within the paradigm of its metaphilosophical discussion. However, this difference with respect to metaphilosophical concerns should also be understood as a location from which to learn more about how the Western philosophical establishment has been structured to understand other ethnically or racially identified philosophies, and this is an important contribution of what Latin American philosophy can *do*. Thinking through Native American metaphilosophical reflections as an instance of a complex articulation of exclusion demonstrates that there is a lot to be gained in dialogical juxtapositions, which reveal new alternatives for understanding what is philosophical. Specifically, they reveal some of the deep-seated problems of Euro-American philosophy that impact Latin American philosophy insofar as it too is part of a tradition that is consistently understood as non-European and non-American.

6. CONCLUSION

Latin American philosophy has seen dramatic growth in the last decade. From conferences and publications, to numerous efforts in the name of diversification, Latin American philosophy, particularly in the United States, has seen tremendous gains toward efforts of recognition. It is for this reason that serious consideration of its metaphilosophical debate remains so important. This essay sought to give the a comprehensive view into the conversation on whether there exists a distinct Latin American philosophy. In so doing, I have highlighted the ways in which Latin American philosophy has understood itself through lenses of colonial epistemes that have constructed standards of what is philosophical through mechanisms of racialized exclusions. Most importantly, however, I have drawn attention to the ways in which the mechanisms of exclusion have themselves motivated and structured how Latin American philosophy has understood its own quest for philosophical identity. Motivations are seldom clear and juxtaposition to Africana and Native American philosophy prove invaluable as they illuminate that which cannot be seen from within the structure of Latin American philosophy's own conversations. In highlighting the motivations for recognition of Latin American philosophy's metaphilosophical debate it becomes clear that the heart of the conversation is oriented around the relationship between Latin American philosophy and its link to Euro-American thought. As such, I hope to have gestured toward a possibility of thinking through the relationship to European thought as one that is both inadequate and indispensable to understanding Latin American philosophical concerns. Instead of asking ourselves whether we think there is a distinct Latin American philosophical tradition we should re-orient toward considering a question of praxis: What do we want Latin American philosophy to do? Ultimately, to do philosophy is a practice, one with its own orientations, and we would do well by always asking ourselves what we orient ourselves around, what lines of thought do we make visible and what might we simultaneously erase as we follow our sense of philosophical grounding?

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