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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

This issue is devoted to papers honoring the career of Ofelia Schutte that were presented at *Philosophy Without Borders: A Symposium in Honor of Ofelia Schutte* on April 6, 2012, at Florida Gulf Coast University. Held on the occasion of her retirement from the University of South Florida, the symposium was organized by the FGCU philosophy club and offered a tribute to Schutte's pioneering work in Latin American philosophy and feminism. Along with guest speakers, whose talks are reproduced herein, the event included a host of pre-recorded video and written messages from friends and colleagues, past and present, including Linda Alcoff, Otávio Bueno, Angelo Corlett, María Luisa Femenías, Eva Kittay, Eduardo Mendieta, Gregory Pappas, and Amy Oliver. In keeping with the intellectual camaraderie and openness of Ofelia Schutte's work, this collection serves as a reminder of the many voices that have contributed efforts towards raising the profile of Latina/o and Hispanic issues in philosophy today.

This issue begins with reflections from a former student, Kevin Aho, whose paper, "Diversity in Philosophy: Reflections on Ofelia Schutte's Legacy," served as opening remarks for the symposium. In it, Aho narrates Schutte's importance in pluralizing philosophy along the critical axes of race, sex, gender, and ethnicity and the relevance of those perspectives in the development of his own personal and professional outlook. Drawing on important statistical profiles of minorities in the profession and narrative accounts of minority experiences in navigating philosophic spaces, he raises concerns about "structural racism in academic philosophy." He offers several institutional and pedagogical responses that include a more interdisciplinary, "methodological openness," the development of non-Eurocentric course syllabi, and the identification of specific financial and advocacy resources for minority students.

In "Latin American Philosophy in the United States: Ofelia Schutte's Role," Jorge Gracia provides a poignant intellectual memoir spanning several decades of professional camaraderie and friendship with Schutte. He narrates the difficult development of Latin American philosophy in the United States, outlining four factors that inhibited its growth and visibility as a philosophical field: the attainment of philosophical credentials, the demographic concentration of specialists in the southwest, the subordination of Latin American philosophy to other areas of specialization, and the constriction of specialists to four-year colleges. Gracia notes, summarily, how "Ofelia's presence in the field was an effective antidote to these four factors."

Next, Elizabeth Millán highlights Schutte's contributions to Latin American feminisms and the extent to which her work has served to "correct the gender gap" in the history of Latin American philosophy. Her essay, "Ofelia Schutte and

the Navigation of the Extraordinary and Complicated Position of the *Voz Latina* in Philosophy," presents a historically adroit account of Latin American thought from the perspective of the marginalized "*voz Latina*", documenting the ways in which—beginning with her inflection of feminist concerns in *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*—"Ofelia has rescued that *voz* from the darkness of the invisible realm" and offered an important corrective to the Latin American philosophical tradition.

In "Critical Genealogies of the History of Latin American Philosophy," Andrea Pitts gives an account of how Schutte's conceptual framework provides important hermeneutical tools that can be used as "strategies to destabilize and decenter the hegemonic speaking positions of U.S. philosophical discourse" by imparting a critical dimension to the development of genealogies in the History of Latin American philosophy. Using two of Schutte's essays, "Postmodernity and Utopia" and "Cultural Alterity," Pitts applies the notion of cross-cultural incommensurability to analyses of nineteenth-century narratives of emancipation (such as those found in the works of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento) to argue in favor of a more open, "polyphonic register through which we can make sense of [the] varied dimensions within Latin American thought."

In "Radical Pluralism: On Finding One's Voice in Professional Philosophy," former student Elena Ruíz-Aho provides a first-person account of Schutte's impact as a teacher and mentor to underrepresented students in philosophy. Drawing on themes of linguistic difference and marginalization in philosophy, Ruíz-Aho describes the specific skills and aptitudes she learned from Schutte, thanking her for creating a safe "epistemic space" in which minority students could pursue a pluralized philosophic practice and develop a sense of their own voice.

As it is part of a manuscript in progress, Mariana Ortega's keynote address, "Self-Mapping, Be-Longing, and the Home Question"—which focused on exilic experiences and the philosophical problems associated with the search for an identity that is tied to a sense of "belonging" or "home"—could not be published here. Instead, her commentary from the evening panel on Schutte's impact on the profession has been reproduced in its entirety, herein published as "On Split Subjects and Differences within Latina Feminism." In these reflections, Ortega paints a moving picture of Schutte's role in helping her navigate the terrain of academic philosophy through both personal encounters and an ongoing "textual nurturing." Ortega concludes with a poignant account of emerging divisions within Latina feminisms, arguing in favor of Schutte's anti-monolithic stance towards disciplinary borders and her call for open dialogue across differences.

The issue ends with Ofelia Schutte's own pedagogic and intellectual retrospective over the course of more than thirty years in philosophy. Her autobiographical essay, entitled "Genealogy of Teaching and Research: Latin American and Feminist Philosophy," offers a candid account of the social

and historical contexts that informed the development of her philosophic work. It outlines three key stages of personal and professional development: First, the post-doctoral stage (1978-1985) where her research and publication record centered on Nietzsche scholarship; a second stage (1985-1999) that commenced with a Fulbright fellowship to Mexico City and inaugurated a period of intellectual shifts towards Latin American philosophy and feminism; and a third stage (1999 to present) that began with her institutional relocation and solidified her previous epistemic turn “from a European to a Latin American approach to knowledge.” Throughout her narrative she defends a research agenda devoted to “supporting multiple forms of inclusiveness in contemporary philosophy” that are attentive to “women’s voices and to the complexities of our individual and collective cultural backgrounds,” aptly concluding, of her own work: “I conceive of my main publications as making space for other voices besides my own.”

Lastly, a note of thanks is owed to the generous support of the FGCU College of Arts and Sciences, especially Dean Donna Henry and Assistant Dean Glenn Whitehouse, and to the financial and organizational contributions of the FGCU Philosophy Club (especially to Ellie Levy, Paul Smith, María Barbero, and Jonathan Wurtz), without whose efforts this event would not have materialized. For their editorial assistance and support, I especially thank Paul Smith and Jonathan Wurtz.

Elena Ruíz-Aho, Guest Editor
Florida Gulf Coast University

ARTICLES

Diversity in Philosophy: Reflections on Ofelia Schutte’s Legacy

Kevin Aho
Florida Gulf Coast University

This paper was conceived as part of the opening remarks of a conference entitled “Philosophy without Borders” at Florida Gulf Coast University in the spring of 2012. The event was organized by former students and colleagues of Ofelia Schutte to recognize her pioneering work on Nietzsche, feminist theory, and Latin American philosophy. Ofelia was set to retire from the University of South Florida at the end of the academic year, and the event offered a wonderful opportunity not only to celebrate her career but to specifically acknowledge her tireless efforts to pluralize and expand the disciplinary borders of philosophy. With a group of emerging and distinguished scholars in Latin American philosophy and Latina feminism the talks centered around Ofelia’s work and about the broader concerns of diversity and methodological pluralism in philosophy. I kicked things off with some anecdotal reflections regarding how blind I was to these issues at the beginning of my own career and how important Ofelia was in helping me to see this as a serious problem in academic philosophy.

As an undergraduate philosophy major in the early nineties at a mid-sized state university in the Rocky Mountains, I cannot recall encountering a single Black or Hispanic student in any of the philosophy courses that I took, including sections of Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics. Minority students were certainly active and visible on campus, but they were nowhere to be found in the department. The faculty consisted of six

white men, and the only words of a female philosopher that I read in college were a few pages of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in an existentialism course, even though the book itself was not assigned. After college, I embarked on a rather convoluted path towards a Ph.D. that took me to three different graduate schools over the course of a decade, including a stint at a highly continental program in New York City and a largely analytic program out West. Neither of these two departments offered any courses on Latin American philosophy, postcolonial philosophy, or philosophy of race at the time and, given the makeup of the student body, there was apparently little effort to recruit or encourage minority students or faculty. The makeup of the faculty at both departments was entirely white, with the exception of one Asian man who taught Eastern philosophy. It was not until very late in my graduate school career that the question of race was brought to my attention as a serious concern for the profession as a whole. I was, at this time, studying at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and I had decided to enroll in a seminar called Philosophy of Culture with the chair of the Women’s Studies department at the time, Ofelia Schutte. For the first time I was introduced to a diverse group of thinkers like Homi Bhabha, Mariana Ortega, and bell hooks, who not only challenged the canon and broadened the normative space of academic philosophy but opened up new and more inclusive ways to think about traditional philosophical questions of truth, knowledge, embodiment, and selfhood. Although I went on to write my dissertation on a relatively mainstream historical figure in twentieth-century European philosophy, Ofelia’s critical, embodied, and situated approach to philosophy made it possible for me to engage this figure in a fresh new way, resulting in the publication of my book *Heidegger’s Neglect of the Body*. Needless to say, what Ofelia brought to the classroom and to my own research has stayed with me and continues to remind me of the problem of diversity in the profession.

A few years after my initial class with Ofelia, I attended my first APA meeting in Washington, D.C., and the sheer numerical whiteness of the profession was on full display in a way that I would never have recognized before I met Ofelia. Although I was quite comfortable seeing all of these white men that looked, more or less, like me, I wondered what it must have felt like to be a Hispanic woman walking through the hotel lobby in the late seventies. I was reminded of George Yancy’s reflections on feeling profoundly out of place at the APA.

As a black embodied philosopher, there is a peculiar sensation that one gets while walking through academic spaces dominated by white bodies. I have especially felt this peculiar sensation while attending philosophy conferences—the American Philosophical Association variety. There is the complex and multifaceted sensation of being drowned in a sea of whiteness. In every direction, there are white bodies moving and discoursing with ease, with no particular sense of being out of place or not at home.¹

Yancy’s experience of alienation should come as no surprise when we consider the statistics. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports from a massive study of all accredited, degree-granting institutions from 1998-2003 that 92 percent of philosophy faculty are white. The minority breakdown is as follows: 3.5 percent of philosophers are Black men, ½ of 1 percent are Black women, and ½ of 1 percent are Hispanic men. And the percentages for Hispanic women and American Indian men and women are so low that they did not even register a percentage.² The APA diversity committees report similar statistics with African American men and women making up less than 5 percent of the profession, Latinos and

Latinas less than 2 percent, and Asian Americans and American Indians faring even worse.³

There are a number of reasons given for this lack of diversity.⁴ Some argue that it is less an issue of race than of class, and that those who choose a career in philosophy tend to be economically privileged enough to embark on a precarious career with limited job prospects. There is certainly some truth to this, but it does not explain why there are large numbers of poor white students in philosophy (like I was), nor does it explain why more minorities are present in other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences such as comparative literature, history, psychology, and sociology, disciplines that are just as precarious economically if not more so. A more compelling reason is that the problem of diversity is more of a reflection of how the borders of the discipline are drawn by an overwhelmingly white male canon in a way that is implicitly—and sometimes, openly—hostile to minority perspectives. The result is what has been called a “vicious circle” for minority students as they continue to read and encounter very few professional philosophers that look like them or give voice to their own embodied concerns, and this, in turn, perpetuates the unsettling feeling that philosophy is a discipline that they do not or should not belong to.⁵

Another compelling reason is that minority philosophers are often singled out as being only concerned with what are traditionally regarded as marginal areas of philosophy such as philosophy of race, feminist theory, and postcolonial philosophy, and that the prestige areas of epistemology, philosophy of mind, and logic would not be interesting to them because these are areas that are methodologically “neutral” regarding issues of culture and race. The result is that talented minority students often feel that their philosophical interests are peripheral to the concerns of *real* philosophy, which means they often end up in other fields such as cultural studies, sociology, or comparative literature. Furthermore, if they are interested in the prestige areas they are told that, because the methodologies in these areas are ahistorical, they cannot be enriched with the introduction of situated, embodied, and racially diverse perspectives.

This opens up the serious question of structural racism in philosophy in terms of what major figures can be studied and what kinds of questions and approaches can count as being valid. The result is that minorities working on marginal areas or figures are often asked to justify the philosophical validity of their projects with the all too common question: “How is what you’re doing philosophy?” Kristie Dotson has highlighted the consequences of this kind of questioning from the philosophical mainstream with what she, borrowing from sociologist Ervin Goffman calls “academic passing.” Here, she is referring to the ways in which minority philosophers often try to legitimize their research projects “by attempting to conceal or neutralize what might be perceived as threatening identities, topics, and methodologies” by making it clear that their ideas “flow from professionally acceptable intellectual traditions.”⁶ According to Dotson, in order to maintain their careers, minority philosophers often go out of their way to deny the very histories, writings, and embodied social realities that gave birth to their philosophical ideas and questions in the first place.

Dotson’s point is especially troubling given that privileging one’s own situated, first-person perspective already has an “acceptable” and established tradition that goes back to Søren Kierkegaard’s existentialist proclamation in 1835: “The thing is to understand myself . . . The thing is to find a truth which is true *for me*, to find the idea for which *I can live and die*.”⁷ Kierkegaard’s emphasis on subjective truth and his critique of the picture of the philosopher as a detached and

disembodied observer was fortified by phenomenologists like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Simone Beauvoir, who all argued that the standpoint of theoretical detachment, universality, and objectivity was actually parasitic on the embodied social practices of everyday being-in-the-world. And this view is not exclusive to continental philosophers in Europe and the United States. It has found expression in the work of influential Anglophone philosophers like Michael Walzer, who describes his project as one that begins from within “the cave, in the city, on the ground,”⁸ in Bernard Williams’s conceptions of authenticity and moral agency,⁹ and in Charles Taylor’s hermeneutic configuration of the self.¹⁰ But if beginning from one’s own situated and embodied perspective is a legitimate philosophical standpoint, why does it not also legitimize the projects of minority philosophers whose ideas are born out of their own situated and embodied truths? This is where the question of structural racism in academic philosophy becomes serious.

What can we in the profession do about this? First, we have to recognize that if philosophy is a project that is concerned with the nature of truth, knowledge, selfhood, and meaning in the widest sense of these terms then we should not exclude racially diverse perspectives if these perspectives can in any way meaningfully contribute this project. Unfortunately, this kind of recognition is not at all self-evident in the profession. In a recent discussion of diversity on a popular philosophy blog, an African American graduate student describes an all too common encounter with one of his professors, who claimed that “Africa has nothing of intellectual merit to contribute to the Western world, except maybe art and music.” He went on to say, “Any contributions that were made [to philosophy] were fraudulently made up by fringe academics as part of a massive PR campaign.” Not surprisingly, this particular student referred to his experience in graduate school as “utter hell.”¹¹

To seriously respond to this kind of intellectual hostility, it seems to me that the first thing the profession needs to do is adopt a position of methodological openness to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Today, the word *interdisciplinarity* is relatively one-dimensional, understood largely in terms of how philosophy maps onto and undergirds the paradigms and methodologies of the natural sciences, especially biology, physics, and neuroscience. But for philosophy to be genuinely pluralistic, inclusive, and diverse, it needs to critically engage non-white thinkers from what are often perceived as *softer* and *less rigorous* disciplines like comparative literature, cultural studies, and linguistics. The aim here is not to broaden the canon simply for the sake of attracting a more diverse student body, but because these diverse perspectives and methodologies may actually contribute something important to the field.

In terms of the practical challenge of bringing in underrepresented groups who feel unwelcome in an overwhelmingly white male discipline, there are a number of things that we as teachers can do. First, we can recommend certain texts by minority philosophers who have documented their own struggles with issues of racism and ignorance in the discipline. This can help minority students understand that they are not alone in their feelings of frustration and alienation, and that it is possible to succeed in the discipline regardless of these obstacles. Here, a good place to start is George Yancy’s book *African American Philosophers: 17 Conversations* and Linda Alcoff’s *Singing the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy*. We can also point to important articles by minority philosophers, such as Jorge Gracia’s “Minorities and the Philosophical Marketplace” and Ofelia’s essay, “Attracting Latinos/as to Philosophy,” that critically engage sociological and institutional

pressures in American philosophy departments that tend to reinforce and perpetuate the status quo.¹²

In addition, we can inform our students about different conferences, fellowships, institutes, and social media that deal specifically with the issues of race and diversity in philosophy. Mariana Ortega's annual Latina Roundtable at John Carroll University has become as a crucial venue for ongoing research in Latin American philosophy and Latina feminism as well as providing vital mentoring opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. (I vividly remember my partner coming back from her first trip to the Latina Roundtable and saying, "I think I won't drop out of philosophy now").

Another valuable resource is the newly launched Pluralist Guide to Philosophy that recommends departments that are especially welcoming to minority perspectives and identifies a number of undergraduate and graduate programs with faculty strengths in Latin American and Hispanic philosophy, feminist theory, philosophy of race, and GLBT studies. The Collegium of Black Women Philosophers and the Facebook group The Society of Young Black Philosophers have also served as important outlets in helping African American graduate students demystify the philosophy job market and provide guidance for young faculty members in negotiating the various obstacles they might encounter early on in their careers. There are also a number of high quality *Newsletters* that the APA now publishes on *Hispanic and Latino Philosophy* and *Indigenous Philosophy* which serve as important sources for scholarship, interviews, and statistical data on the status of underrepresented groups. We can also encourage undergraduates to apply to summer institutes that focus on mentoring underrepresented and minority students in philosophy, such as Penn State University's PIKSI summer institute and their two-day CUSP (Cultivating Underrepresented Students) workshop as well as Rutgers University's Summer Institute. And we need to be more proactive in identifying crucial sources of funding for minorities such as the Ford Fellowships and the McNair Scholars Program.

Finally, we can honor the pioneers who have made it possible for us to talk about questions of race and diversity in philosophy in the first place. It is because of the work of philosophers like Ofelia Schutte that we can now claim Latin American philosophy as an area of specialization where as recently as ten years ago this would have been impossible. And there are now wide-ranging curricular changes taking place at the undergraduate and graduate level where texts and writers from the global South and Indigenous traditions are being read as legitimate contributions to the field. And departments now realize that they may not be able to use the words "diverse" and "pluralistic" to describe their departments if they do not actually have the faculty, research programs, and course offerings that reflect the embodied concerns of underrepresented groups. So we are doing our part in honoring a courageous thirty-five year career in philosophy, a career that has laid the groundwork for young philosophy programs like the one here at Florida Gulf Coast University, where it is now possible to have a symposium called "Philosophy without Borders."

Endnotes

1. George Yancy, "Loving Wisdom and the Effort to Make Philosophy 'Unsafe'." rackcdn. <http://c961210.r10.cf2.rackcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Essay-Yancy-Loving-Wisdom.pdf> (June 2, 2012).
2. National Center for Education Statistics, "Full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff in degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity, sex, and selected characteristics: Fall 2003." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_254.asp (July 2, 2012).

3. Linda Martín Alcoff, "Introduction," in *Singing in the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 3.
4. My thoughts on this matter were largely informed by an excellent discussion that took place on the popular philosophy blog *News APPS: Art, Politics, Philosophy, Science* after Kristie Dotson posted her piece entitled "Reflections on Academic Passing."
5. This idea is taken from Mark Lance's thoughtful comments on the *Leiter Reports* blog post, "Is there any hope for the racial diversity of the philosophy profession?" <http://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2011/06/is-there-any-hope-for-the-racial-diversity-of-the-philosophy-profession.html>.
6. Dotson, "Reflections on Academic Passing." <http://www.newappsblog.com/2012/03/reflections-on-academic-passing.html>. See also Dotson's "How is this Paper Philosophy?" *Comparative Philosophy* 3:2 (2012).
7. Søren Kierkegaard, and Robert W. Bretall, "My emphasis," in *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 5.
8. Michael Walzer, "Preface," in *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), xiv.
9. Bernard Arthur Owen Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) and *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
10. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: Making of the Modern Identity*, new ed. (New York: Cambridge University, 1992).
11. This description and many others like it took place on the *Leiter Reports* discussion: "Is there any hope for racial diversity in the philosophy profession?" <http://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2011/06/is-there-any-hope-for-the-racial-diversity-of-the-philosophy-profession.html>.
12. Jorge Gracia, "Minorities and the Philosophical Marketplace," *Metaphilosophy* 33, no. 5 (2002): 535-51. Ofelia Schutte, "Attracting Latinos/as to Philosophy," *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*, edited by George Yancy (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).

Latin American Philosophy in the United States: Ofelia Schutte's Role

Jorge J. E. Gracia
University at Buffalo

Ofelia Schutte's distinguished career as a philosopher expands more than three decades. I have followed it with interest, respect, and admiration, and I am delighted that I can participate in this celebration of her many and significant accomplishments on the occasion of her retirement. Although she is ending her teaching career, I am sure that she is far from retiring from philosophy, and that she will continue to have a significant presence in the profession and will continue to publish for many years to come. The pleasure I feel is compounded because we have been associates and friends for many years. We even share some history. As most of you know, we are both Cuban born, and we both came to the United States in the early sixties, Ofelia in 1960 and I in 1961. Our backgrounds are somewhat similar in that both of us have some French ancestors that our families regarded as particularly important for the understanding of our families. We both went to college here and were interested in literature—she as a major in English and I as a double major in philosophy and English. Our histories are different in that I am older than Ofelia by a few years and, whereas she came to the United States with her family, I came by myself. Still, we share common experiences that tie us: the separation from

the mother country at an early age, the clash of cultures, our interest in philosophy, Latin America, and literature, and the need to develop a sense of ourselves as Cubans, Hispanics, and Americans.

Ofelia began her academic career with a B.A. degree from Barry College and M.A. degrees from the University of Miami and Miami University in Ohio. In 1978, she received a Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale and the same year she began teaching at the University of Florida. Her philosophical work since then has covered at least four important areas of research: feminist theory in general and particularly in Latin America, Latin American philosophy and thought, Continental philosophy with particular emphasis on Nietzsche, and philosophy of culture and postmodernism. In this presentation I focus on her work on Latin American philosophy, both because of my personal interest in this field and also because others can more appropriately and effectively comment on the other dimensions of her work. My aim in the limited space I have at my disposal will be to point out some of the ways in which Ofelia has had an important role to play in making it possible for Latin American philosophy to have a presence in the United States.

Although Ofelia's scholarly presence in American philosophical circles was almost immediately evident after her graduation, her first publications focused on Nietzsche, following the topic of her dissertation at Yale. However, in 1984, six years after graduation, she published an article on the reconstruction of Western identity in Latin America. This constituted a significant landmark in a scholarly path that has occupied her ever since, and reached a high point with the publication of her groundbreaking book, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*, published nine years after her graduation, in 1993.¹ In between these two publications, she published more than ten articles and two chapters in books, dealing with various aspects of Latin American thought, apart from several articles dealing with other areas of philosophy. After the book appeared, she continued to publish actively in this field, with eight articles in journals and more than sixteen chapters in books devoted to topics related to Latin American philosophy and thought. In order to make clear the importance of this body of work I need to refer to the situation of Latin American philosophy in the United States both before and after Ofelia began to make contributions to the field. I hope to show that the visibility of Latin American philosophy in this country owes an important debt to Ofelia's continued scholarly activity.

I should begin by saying that when Ofelia started publishing, Latin American philosophy had very limited visibility in this country. Not that Latin America was completely ignored as an object of study by academics. Indeed, plenty of attention was paid to issues of politics, economics, and literature. Political science and economics departments concerned themselves with issues related to Latin America, and so did departments of Spanish with Latin American literature. But when it came to the philosophical thought produced in Latin America, there was almost a complete lack of interest on the part of academia. The studies that were published about our countries and societies at the time were concerned by and large with the social, economic, and political conditions of our societies, or with the literature they had produced.

This was clear, for example, in the yearly programs of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which is the premier forum for the study of Latin America in the United States. Very seldom did one find in the program a panel devoted to the study of Latin American thought or ideas. Indeed, the number of specialists who worked in this area was very small. And no wonder, for universities had tended to ignore this field

of study across the board, with the unfortunate result that trying to get a job in this area of scholarly endeavor was nearly impossible. In literature, of course, considerable attention was paid to Latin America and the so-called boom. Who did not know who Jorge Luis Borges or Gabriel García Márquez were? But this is literature, not philosophy or philosophical thought, and the center of scholarly activities in literature was the Modern Languages Association (MLA). The primary association for philosophy, the American Philosophical Association, did not ever have anything to do with Latin American philosophy. Only a few internationally disposed philosophers, like Marvin Farber in Buffalo, even paid any attention to it.

The absence of Latin American philosophy from the horizon of American philosophy was compounded by the reluctance of presses to publish books on this topic. I remember the difficulties Risieri Frondizi and I encountered when we were trying to publish an anthology of Latin American philosophical texts in English in the United States. The rejections were uniform, and only many years after the Spanish version of the text had appeared (1975), and reappeared (1981), in Mexico, was I able to published a shorter and revised version of the original (1986) in English in the United States.² The need for a text such as the one we were proposing to publish in the seventies was evident insofar as there was nothing like it in print in English, making it almost impossible to offer a course on the history of ideas, even the recent history, in Latin America. Students throughout the United States could not be introduced to Latin American thought. Only courses on the sociology, culture, political history, and literature were possible.

One of the stumbling blocks to the presence of Latin American philosophy in the United States was the philosophical credentials of those who worked in the field. Four factors in particular tended to undermine their impact across the profession, particularly in the early eighties and before. First, many of them had fields other than philosophy as their main areas of specialty, worked primarily in departments of languages, political science, and Latin American studies, and did not even belong to the American Philosophical Association. As a result, they were professionally isolated from the profession of philosophy. Indeed, the first anthology of Latin American thought published in English was published by Aníbal Sánchez Reulet, who taught in a Spanish department.³ Disciplinary boundaries are very strict in the academic world, so it is not surprising that work on Latin American philosophy became associated with fields other than philosophy and considered only of marginal interest by philosophers.

A second factor was that most of those who worked in Latin American philosophy taught in the southwest. This tended to keep the field segregated to certain parts of the country—Texas, New Mexico, and California—whereas the center of activity in the profession of philosophy was concentrated in the northeast—and the area of Chicago and its surroundings.

A third factor that played a role in the precarious situation of Latin American philosophy in the United States during this time was that most of those who were interested in it had other philosophical fields they considered to be primary. For example, Frondizi began as a student of German philosophers such as Scheler and Hartmann, and I began as a medievalist and metaphysician, and both of us did Latin American philosophy on the side, as it were.

A final point that should not be overlooked is that most of those who worked on Latin American philosophy in the seventies taught at four-year colleges rather than graduate programs. This undermined the importance that their work was accorded and also diminished the credibility of the field in the eyes of the philosophy establishment. Philosophy, like other

disciplines of learning, functions on the basis of professional connections and authority, and there was a vacuum of authority concerning Latin American philosophy.

Ofelia's presence in the field was an effective antidote to these four factors. In the first place, because from the very beginning, she taught in a department of philosophy, rather than literature. This placed her, and her field, at the same level as that of other philosophers and their fields in the country.

Second, she was never located in the southwest. She taught in Northern Florida and her geographical area of operation was the northeast. This allowed her to attend conferences and participate in the life of the profession at a level that would have been difficult had she been located in the southwest. It brought her out of a geographical ghetto in which a good number of the few specialists on Latin American philosophy resided at the time. So again, she challenged the status quo.

Third, although one of Ofelia's areas of scholarship was Nietzsche and Continental philosophy in general, from the very beginning she regarded Latin American thought as on an equal footing with it. Indeed, to this date she lists it as her first field of specialization, together with feminist theory, on her vita. She was thus an exception to the rule that Latin American philosophy was secondary to other fields in philosophy as happened with many of us. For a long time, those of us interested in Latin American philosophy were mostly dilettantes because to get and keep jobs in the academy we needed to do other things. As mentioned before, I was a medievalist, and it was as such that I had established myself, and many others were in a similar situation—they had to work in race and gender theory, political philosophy, or what have you. The case of Ofelia has been different from the beginning, for she had as one of her main foci of work the study of Latin American thought, although she related it often to more established areas of study, such as feminism.

And fourth, Ofelia taught in a major research university with a graduate program in philosophy, something that was rare at the time. This was particularly significant because in principle it appeared that she would teach courses on Latin American philosophy at the graduate level and have graduate students who might choose Latin American philosophy as an area where they could find a topic for a doctoral dissertation. The reality was quite different due to the nature of the department where she taught, but all the same her presence in a graduate program helped to change the image of Latin American philosophy in the profession in the United States.

I met Ofelia in the early eighties, and it was clear from the beginning that our interests overlapped, and so we started a professional relationship that has lasted until the present.

In 1989 I had founded a series in SUNY Press entitled *Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture*, which I started with a book by Iván Jaksic, a student of mine at Buffalo.⁴ In fact, it was Jaksic's book that gave me the idea of starting the series. Jaksic's work was an important addition to the literature on the history of ideas in Latin America, and thus it made sense to publish it. Knowing the difficulties of publishing anything on Latin American intellectual history, I thought that the only way to ensure that good books were published in this area of research was to found a series devoted to it. Jaksic's book was primarily about Chile and, although it did contain much that was relevant for the history of the whole of Latin America, the series needed books that emphasized the area as a whole. So, when I found out that Ofelia was working on a book on Latin American identity, I told her that I would very much like to publish it.

The book was typical of Ofelia's work. It was a marvelous study of Latin American philosophy, carefully argued and with plenty of novelty. I remember how impressed I was with the

chapters on Zea and Mariátegui. In particular, her thesis that Mariátegui had produced a truly Latin American philosophy based on the alterations he introduced in Marxism in order to accommodate the so-called problem of the Indian in Peru was something new and important. Latin American philosophers had been debating the originality, viability, and even existence of a Latin American philosophy since the forties, some even doubting its authenticity. Much speculation had taken place surrounding this topic and much effort had been invested in grappling with it. There were even some anthropological studies, such as that of Félix Schwartzmann, that tried to show how Latin America had produced a particular culture and ideas that were unique and that were the basis of a philosophy all its own.⁵ But most of what had been produced was highly speculative, lacking sufficient factual and conceptual grounding. This is what made Ofelia's study different and significant. Her interpretation of Mariátegui was quite novel in that it showed in very concrete terms how this philosopher had modified Marxism in significant ways to be able to use it to analyze the Peruvian reality.

What made the book especially credible was the founding of the arguments and theses on a careful reading of the pertinent texts. Often Latin American philosophers cut corners, moving quickly in order to indulge in the speculative theses they are eager to defend. But Ofelia cut no corners. In this, and just like in Jaksic's study, the work was a model for doing the history of Latin American thought.

Ofelia's book was the first of its kind in many ways. It was the first book that dealt with the history of Latin American ideas rather than with politics or social issues; it was the first that studied very recent materials rather than earlier periods of development; it was the first concerned with the whole of Latin America, rather than with some country, author, or current; it was the first that raised and explored the problem of cultural identity; and it was the first written by an American philosopher who approached the subject matter philosophically and in English. In short, this was a groundbreaking work in the historiography of Latin American philosophy in this country.

The publication of the book at such a propitious time also increased its impact. The prospect of the study of Latin American philosophy in the United States was helped at the time by other factors as well, and changes were becoming evident in the late eighties and early nineties. Indeed, even the stodgy American Philosophical Association founded a Committee for Hispanics in Philosophy in 1991, of which Ofelia became chair in 1995. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hispanics/Latinos have become the largest minority in the country and projections are that our numbers will continue to increase substantially for years to come. This has forced the Anglo-American majority to take us into account. Businesses realized that in order to prosper they must market to this group. Politicians began to court their vote. And Hispanics/Latinos themselves began to demand a greater role in American society and a greater understanding of who we are. This in turn brought attention to the need to understand our identity, our history, and our thought. Still, the emphasis continued to be on political, economic, sociological, and literary matters, but the study of our thought and its history began to make inroads in the academy. Our identity could not be separated from our thinking, and thus, with some reluctance, it became necessary to look back at key periods in the history of Latin American ideas.

It is in this context that we should understand the importance of the work of Ofelia Schutte throughout her academic career, and in particular the significance of the publication of her study of identity nearly twenty years ago. The book appeared at a time when the growth of the Hispanic/Latino

population in the United States was just beginning to be noticed. Those of us concerned with the investigation of our thought in the United States were struggling to make room in the regular curriculum of the universities and colleges and in publication venues for works that investigated our intellectual history. The initial results were generally disappointing. In the seventies, the Society for Iberian and Latin American Thought was founded by a few enthusiasts of Latin American philosophy, but it was barely alive when Schutte's book appeared. The organization of panels in various learned societies was difficult not only because the membership in the societies was not interested in them, but also because it was difficult to find scholars who were interested in participating, or had work mature enough to be presented, in professional forums. In this context Ofelia's work became a fundamental point of reference and a welcome source of encouragement.

Fortunately, the demographic pressures have continued and recent attempts have been more successful in establishing the field, such as the publication of the Blackwell *Companion to Latin American Philosophy* (2012), of which Schutte is one of the editors.⁶ Her participation in this project, along with Susana Nuccetelli and Otávio Bueno, is one of the most significant events in the historiography of Latin American philosophy in the United States. A Companion of this sort is published only because there is a demand. The editors of Wiley/Blackwell are not really interested in charity; they want to make money, although they want to make money with something that is respectable and merits attention. The publication of the Companion indicates both that there is some demand for Latin American philosophy and also that the field has become legitimate. Obviously, the situation of Latin American thought in the United States has changed substantially from the time when it was almost impossible to publish anything in the field.

Even more significant than the Companion's appearance in print is the approach used in it. This collection has the great merit that the editors tried to reflect the various approaches to Latin American philosophy current among members of the community of scholars devoted to its study. Although there is a strong analytic dimension to this book, it also has a Continental component due in great part to Ofelia's editorial presence. In this sense the volume is healthily reflective of the very presence of Latin American philosophy in the United States with its various modalities. As such, the volume reveals much about the field. I do not have space to dwell adequately on this here, but let me mention two points that are particularly important. The first is that, in order to cover all the areas necessary, the editors had to include articles from some non-philosophers and from philosophers whose work is not primarily in Latin American philosophy, in addition to articles from scholars who make Latin American philosophy part of their primary research. This shows that, although the situation of Latin American philosophy in the United States has improved, it is still precarious. The second is that the volume opens a dialogue with the work of Latinos in this country. This is essential for the growth of Latin American philosophy in the United States. The interest in Latin American philosophy cannot increase unless it is connected to philosophical interests in the United States, and the key to this connection is to be found in the work of Latinos, for their work functions as a bridge between philosophy in the United States and philosophy in Latin America. The Companion, then, can serve as a useful tool to promote the presence of Latin American philosophy in the United States and Ofelia's influence in editorial decisions helped to keep a broad perspective in the volume and thus make it the useful tool that it is.

Next, I want to say something about a recent article that Ofelia wrote for a collection of essays entitled *Forging People:*

Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/Latina Thought (2011), for this article shows how she has also helped the visibility of Latin American philosophy in the United States by focusing on topics current in philosophy in this country. The article is entitled "Undoing 'Race': Martí's Historical Predicament," and it illustrates many of the traits that have characterized Ofelia's scholarly output for the last thirty years.⁷ Let me point to three of these. First, Ofelia's continued interest in her roots in Cuba. Throughout her career, she has not forgotten that she was born in Cuba. The thought of José Martí has continued to be for her a source of inspiration and a focus of research. However, her approach to Martí has not been apologetic or ideological. She has faced squarely the possible inconsistencies in Martí's thought and has presented them in the context in which he produced his ideas, rather than trying to offer an apology for them or what is often common and much worse, reading them to justify some pre-determined social or political agenda.

Second, her interest in Martí has not been parochial or nostalgic. She sees Martí in the larger context of Latin American thought, rather than in the narrow nationalistic confines of Cuban studies. And she has avoided the mushy nostalgia that permeates much of the writing on Martí by Cubans residing in the United States.

Third, and perhaps most important, in the article Ofelia explores a topic of contemporary social concern for Hispanics/Latinos in the United States. Her interest in Martí is not purely academic, but transcends the parameters of academia to deal with issues that go beyond, and with ideas that have a practical application in contemporary society in the United States, Latin America, and the world. Ofelia has consistently been interested in questions of identity, and she has approached these questions through the context of the struggles of immigrants to this country in the search for an identity that merges the various experiences we have as a result of having been transplanted from our original countries to a new one. How are we to become whole when we come from fragments? How are we Cuban, Hispanic, Latino, and American? In a well-known article published over ten years ago, Ofelia uses the metaphor of negotiating to approach the dilemmas we face, pointing out that it is a never-ending process in which different strands become prominent at different places and times.⁸ It is in this context that we need to understand her article on Martí and race.

Note the significant title. Its first part claims that Martí has undone race. That is, he has untangled the knot that traps us in it. This reflects the thrust of the article, which is Martí's putting race in its proper place. Yes, there is a part of race discourse that is enormously important, namely, the discourse through which we can address the many abuses that are committed against humanity through racial discrimination. But just as important, in the second part of the title, Ofelia turns to the significance of context for the understanding of the thought of Martí, as it is for the understanding of the thought of any thinker. This recognizes that thought is not separated from action and the constraints of practical life; it is not abstract and irrelevant.

For Ofelia, philosophy is not a purely academic matter. Certainly, it is a matter of thinking and thinking carefully, of textual analysis and hard intellectual work. But philosophy is more than that. For thought arises from a concrete context and practical needs. For Martí, this is important because his ideas about race arise in the context of the revolutionary struggle against Spain by a people who are racially mixed. And what is important in this context? The unity of the people who are members of the one single race, humanity. Missing this leads to misunderstandings of Martí's philosophy. How can we understand that he in some passages claimed that race is not

real and elsewhere tells us that there is a good form of racism that we should adopt? Because of the context in which he is working and the problem he is trying to solve: the problem of discrimination and the division of a population that needs to be united.

So far I have argued that the presence of Ofelia and her work in philosophy has been significantly instrumental in lending visibility to Latin American philosophy in the United States, and I have referred to the demographic pressures that have helped this visibility. However, I have said nothing about a topic that I know is dear to Ofelia's heart, namely, the importance of studying Latin American philosophy in this country not just because of demographic pressures, but because of the need for diversity and inclusiveness in a field that in many ways has been dominated by an Eurocentric and masculine perspective. How many philosophers who are not part of developed countries in the West are read widely? Where is the presence of the Third World in philosophical discussions? And how many women have a place in the contemporary philosophical dialogue? Certainly not enough in the United States.

Latin America has a rich and long philosophical history extending for more than five hundred years, but I am sure that only a handful of philosophers teaching in graduate programs in the United States can name even one Latin American philosopher of note. And why should they know Latin American philosophy? Because to do so would prevent them from suffering from the kind of insularity that is frequent among members of our profession. Latin American philosophy is rich with concerns about social identities, for example, and it is only recently that a topic such as this has become the focus of discussion in the United States. Besides, Latin American philosophers bring a different perspective than those common among Americans, enriching the discussion and challenging widespread dogmas. The benefits of diversity and inclusiveness are essential to our discipline, and it is important that this homage to Ofelia Schutte serve as a reminder of all she has done to promote this goal and of the long road that still lies ahead.

In closing, let me point out that Ofelia Schutte's contributions to philosophy in the United States have been many and far reaching. One of the most important ones, in my view, is that her work has helped increase the visibility of Latin American philosophy in this country. Another is that she has never succumbed to the academic vice of ignoring the relation to context and the practical needs of society. For this reason, her work has more than academic interest and has served to bridge the gap between philosophy in the United States and the philosophy of Latin America, where philosophy has traditionally been closely tied to practical, political, and social concerns.

Endnotes

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Ofelia Schutte and the Navigation of the Extraordinary and Complicated Position of the Voz Latina in Philosophy

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Ofelia Schutte's voice has been so important to our field and in particular to me, as a Hispanic woman in philosophy. In the wake of Ofelia's retirement from her post at the University of South Florida, her voice will continue to resonate through the groundbreaking articles and books she has left us; nonetheless, her presence at professional gatherings and as a counter-current to the philosophical minutemen and, I hate to say it, *hombres necios* (*de cuyos nombres no me quiero acordar*) who populate our field will be sorely missed.

My first publication was a book review I wrote as a graduate student. Jorge Gracia suggested I review Ofelia's book, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*. That review was published in the *Journal for the History of Philosophy*.¹ Ofelia's book, published in 1993, remains a critical contribution to Latin American philosophy; indeed, it is a book that, in presenting the relationships among liberation, cultural identity, and Latin American social reality, helped carve a new space for a part of philosophy that had been invisible except to a select few. In fact, back when I was an undergraduate at Bowdoin College, when I told my professor there that I wanted to go to graduate school to do work on Latin American philosophy, his response was that Latin American philosophy did not exist. Given that I had read a book by Leopoldo Zea that summer, whose work had sparked my interest in Latin American philosophy, I was confident that my professor was wrong. Then I found a special issue of the *Philosophical Forum* dedicated to something that did not exist, Latin American philosophy. The issue was edited by Jorge Gracia and there was an article on Latin American feminism by Ofelia, so in that special issue, I found a community of philosophers talking about an area of philosophy that presumably did not exist. Ofelia's article in that special issue of the *Philosophical Forum* helped my desire to pursue graduate work take firmer shape, and Jorge's support cemented the deal. This vignette is more than a trip down memory lane: I think it illustrates a serious problem with how philosophy is defined by far too many philosophers, with a narrow and exclusionary gaze. Ofelia's pluralistic, interdisciplinary approach has broadened our field, making it much more inviting to a wide diversity of students. In particular, Ofelia's book allowed a new set of conversations about Latin American philosophy to take place and introduced Anglophone readers to venerable voices that had long been ignored. Ofelia

has given voice to so many figures and her work has cleared a space for many more—Ofelia Schutte’s work has enriched and diversified the field of philosophy.

In the introduction to *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*, Ofelia discusses her interest in and dedication to social change—her book helped bring an important dose of social change to philosophy itself. I was particularly drawn to Ofelia’s work on Mariátegui and on feminist thought. While I will focus on the latter, some strands of the former will be woven into my all too brief tapestry of Ofelia’s legacy. Before Ofelia’s work on these topics, both Mariátegui and feminist thought had long languished, had been kept outside the carefully guarded borders of philosophy, and was largely ignored even within the tradition of Latin American thought itself. Marginalized figures and themes within a marginalized area (Latin American thought) seem to suffer the most severe injustices. Philosophical courage and a lack of deference to an exclusionist tradition are necessary elements to address the injustices that still riddle our profession, and Ofelia has provided ample evidence of both in the course of her long career, a career dedicated to the cause of social justice and philosophical change. I think, though I won’t have time to argue the point here, that Ofelia’s work on Nietzsche provided some of the tools that gave her the *Freiheit* (to use a term from Schlegel, another philosopher who eschewed deference) to begin a work on Latin American thought with a chapter on one of Latin America’s greatest Marxists, José Carlos Mariátegui, and end the same book with a chapter on cultural identity, liberation, and feminist theory. I will begin with a focus on what I take to be one of the most glaring absences in the Latin American philosophical tradition and one that Ofelia’s work helped to fill. As Ofelia herself tells us in the introduction to *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*, her “inclusion of a chapter on feminism is intended to expand the existing paradigms and bring the question of the equality of women to the forefront of discussion.”² This sort of inclusive move has been all too uncommon in the Latin American tradition (and, of course, in the philosophical tradition itself).

The Silenced *Voz Latina*

The Latin American philosophical tradition is consumed by the problem of identity. One of the region’s most central figures, Simón Bolívar, put forth a classic analysis of the complications surrounding identity formation prompted by independence from Spain, an independence which potentially had much to offer women, yet offered little as the female voice was excluded from Bolívar’s treatment of identity. Another luminary in the area of the problem of Latin American cultural identity was the Mexican thinker, Leopoldo Zea, who while acknowledging the marginality of women, postulates that just as racial mixing and nationhood resolve or erase the problems of the indigenous, so too does *mestizaje* presumably erase the marginal status women possess, though in the end he also omits the female voice from his analysis. Bolívar and Zea philosophize about the search for justice and identity in Latin America without taking into account valuable perspectives on the contributions women can make to society.³ Ofelia’s work addresses this absence by adding the voice of feminist theory to issues of cultural identity and liberation to her account of the Latin American tradition, thereby radically enriching the tradition.

The Latin American tradition has remained far too invisible in the mainstream philosophical community, and the feminine voices within it have taken even longer to be recognized. Part of the silence of female voices in the Latin American intellectual tradition can be traced to the narrow options available to women in the colonial period. Of course, we do have the strong voice of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651?-1695), the

Mexican baroque poet and philosopher. Some have called her the “tenth Muse” in the Spanish literary world. The Nobel Prize winner, Octavio Paz, has placed her self-reflective poetry in the same class as that of Rubén Darío, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman.⁴ Sor Juana had a first-rate philosophical mind and has become a powerful symbol for independent and socially exploratory thought in the Americas. Her poem, “Foolish Men,” questions the hypocrisy of men regarding sexual behavior, especially prostitution, and the Eve-Mary dichotomy many such men seek to perpetuate:

Or which is more to be blamed—
though both will have cause for chagrin:
the woman who sins for money
or the man who pays money to sin?
So why are you men all so stunned
at the thought you’re all guilty alike?
Either like them for what you’ve made them
or make of them what you can like.⁵

Alas, the spirit of Sor Juana’s lines could be echoed by thinkers centuries later, because the situation of women remained oppressive, trapping them into narrowly scripted roles. The *hombres necios* endured. Writing in 1869, John Stuart Mill was still calling for the liberation of women. In the first paragraph of *The Subjection of Women*, though not summoned by name, is a call to those intractable *hombres necios*. They still need to be reminded that:

[T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

Even in the twentieth century, society had not yet been freed of the prejudices of the *hombres necios*. Walter Benjamin writes in his fragment from 1920, “Of Love and Related Matters”:

Oppressed by the blindness of men, the supernatural life of a woman atrophies and declines into the merely natural, and thereby into the unnatural. This alone explains the strange process of dissolution brought about in our day by the primitive instincts of men, as the result of which women can be understood only in terms of the simultaneous images of the whore and the untouchable beloved.⁶

Sor Juana, battling the “primitive instincts” of men during the colonial period, was certainly a thinker ahead of her time, and it took much courage to express her views: views that revealed the hypocritical stereotypes which trapped women into spaces that stunted their intellectual and moral growth. Lamentably, the Latin American philosophical tradition did not follow Sor Juana’s lead—and thinkers well into the twenty-first century are still battling for the “perfect equality” to which Mill makes reference. Ofelia’s voice has been a crucial weapon in the fight for that perfect equality, and it is a voice all too rare in the Latin American tradition. There is no easy solution, philosophical or other, to the problem of women’s oppression. Ofelia is well aware of this, as she addresses the problems of an uncritical emphasis on gender equality, she tells us that:

the egalitarian model is limited insofar as it regards men (who have been taken as the standard defining what it means to be a human being) as the standard measuring what women shall be equal to.⁷

Ofelia also indicates that an emphasis on sexual difference without further consideration derived from a consideration of patriarchal relations of power will only serve to invite more discrimination in the future. If this proved to be true, women could never escape the double standard ruling their lives and the double exploitation they face at the workplace and in the home.⁸

The value of Ofelia's contribution to giving a voice to gender in the Latin American philosophical tradition cannot be overstated. The voice of women even today is often silenced, making discussion of gender issues within the context of cultural identity and social liberation a troubling rarity for many reasons. While I don't want to essentialize Latin American philosophy, I think it is fair to characterize the Latin American tradition in terms of a quest for social justice, and such a quest is doomed to be incomplete if gender is left out of the search.

Social Justice and Gender Inequality

Latin American thought emerges, in large part, from the complications and trauma born of Spain's conquest of America. As the territories of Spanish America began to break from Spain's colonial clutches to form independent nations, a new ordering was put into place and questions regarding the identity of the peoples of the region were articulated. Famously, in delivering his speech at the Inauguration of the Second National Congress of Venezuela at Angostura (February 15, 1819), Simón Bolívar trenchantly expressed the identity crisis facing the peoples of the new republic:

We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that gave us birth against the opposition of the invaders. Thus our position is most extraordinary and complicated.⁹

This diagnosis of an identity crisis inaugurated a tradition of thought dedicated to gaining clarity on what it means to be Latin American, to exist in a "most extraordinary and complicated" position of a hybrid identity. What tradition within philosophy, one might ask, would be more poised to be aware of and ready to address the question of gender inequality? Unfortunately, the complications of the gender question have eluded too many thinkers of the Latin American philosophical tradition. The extraordinary and complicated position of women in the Latin American tradition has been neglected.

As colonial subjects became citizens of newly independent republics, critical issues of identity were bound to take center stage. These concerns with identity were clearly expressed by Bolívar as he grappled with the problem of the mixture of races found within the people of his region. Bolívar was certainly not the only thinker to consider these matters, but he did forge a tradition in Latin American thought: a concern with the identity crisis plaguing the region of Latin America in the wake of colonization. Two central documents from his corpus highlight the development of the problem of identity as it was forged during the period of independence. The "Letter from Jamaica" (1815) responds to the governor of Jamaica's request for Bolívar's views on prospects for Latin American liberation and the establishment of one unified nation. Bolívar's letter is a call to independence of Latin America from Spain. In it, he complains of a state of permanent infancy suffered by the nations of Spanish America and of their dependency upon

Europe. A major theme of the letter is the problem of what it means to be American. He points to a tension:

[i]n short, though Americans by birth we derive our rights from Europe, and we have to assert these rights against the rights of the natives, and at the same time we must defend ourselves against the invaders.¹⁰

In the letter, Bolívar also addressed issues of how to develop a nation of free citizens from a New World that had originated under the yoke of Spanish tyranny. Bolívar was concerned with the problem of how leaders of newly independent republics would earn the respect of fellow citizens, when all with which the colonial subjects had hitherto been indoctrinated was respect for what was not native to the lands of America. In short, Bolívar is interested in the political and social ramifications of liberation in the wake of colonization. Central to the project of liberation is the matter of settling issues of identity, for the group of people that would comprise the new, independent nation of Venezuela was far from homogenous, including as it did *criollos*, *mestizos*, and indigenous peoples. The *criollos* and *mestizas* received short shrift in Bolívar's work, and this despite Sor Juana's early voice dedicated to drawing attention to the deleterious consequences of excluding women from full participation in Latin American society.

In the speech he delivered to the congress of Angostura in 1819, Bolívar urges his public to bid farewell to Bolívar "the Liberator" and embrace him simply as a "good citizen." He argues that Venezuela had been liberated, and now the long task of nation building must begin. He discusses the particular problems that the newly born nation faces in the light of its colonial past and draws attention to what he calls the "racial mixture" of the people of the region, while emphasizing the unity that must prevail if the country is to prosper: political equality must trump the physical and moral inequalities that may be present amongst the people of Venezuela.

As the country comes to terms with its independence from colonial power, Bolívar stresses the unity that must prevail to establish order in the nation, and warns that this unity will be challenged on a number of fronts. Bolívar was keenly aware that diversity might upset the unity necessary for the progress of the country:

The diversity of racial origin will require an infinitely firm hand and great tactfulness in order to manage this heterogeneous society, whose complicated mechanism is easily damaged, separated, and disintegrated by the slightest controversy. (*Letter*, 70-71)

In calling for a move toward the stability and security that help promote social well-being for Venezuela's citizens, Bolívar calls for "unity, unity, unity" in all areas of life. He writes: "The blood of our citizens is varied: let it be mixed for the sake of unity" (*Letter*, 71). For Bolívar, a concern with race is part of a concern with identity and the project of nation building. Laws should trump all of the diversity that threatens to make the project of nation building unmanageable; for laws will secure happiness for the diverse body of citizens and unify the diverse peoples of Venezuela.

Bolívar was well aware that racial diversity could, if not properly addressed, become a hurdle on the way to the development of a unified, stable nation. The central ordering framework of the nation (its legal code) was written with this concern in mind, and so some of the practices of racialization that haunted and continue to haunt U.S. society were avoided.

From their inception, Latin American nations accepted *mestizo* identity as a way to achieve some sort of unity. But Bolívar's acceptance of *mestizo* identity covered up the issues

of *mestiza* identity thus perpetuating the very problems that Sor Juana had so courageously identified during the colonial period. Race is certainly a major source of attention for the thinkers of Latin America concerned with the problem of identity, and there have been original contributions to the notion of race within the Latin American tradition. But a concern with racial equality should not overshadow a concern for gender inequality. Yet this has been part of a perniciously prevalent pattern in the Latin American philosophical tradition.

More than a century after Bolívar, another Latin American thinker also attempted to address social injustice through an emphasis on race and a neglect of gender issues. Leopoldo Zea demonstrated a clear understanding of the ways in which indigenous peoples were devastated and marginalized by the Conquest, and he believed that *mestizaje* definitively solved the problem of racial discrimination and that *mexicanidad* offered everyone the privileges of nationhood. A major limitation of Zea's approach to the problem of cultural identity is his neglect of how gender might upset the mixing process that he thought would create some degree of social equality for Latin Americans. Ofelia's work is a corrective to this narrow vision for social change.

Zea's focus on *mestizaje* in many ways erases the problem of the exclusion of women. Race appears to trump gender when coloniality is simultaneously brought into the discussion, perhaps because men and women considered together have the power of numbers. So long as women are lumped together with men when Zea endorses *mestizaje*, he intends for the new "cosmic race" and nationhood to benefit all Mexicans equally. However, if we consider women's relationship to *mestizaje* separately and specifically, we encounter complications that long pre-date Zea.

In light of this tradition of failing to address justice for women in the Latin American struggle for social justice, how refreshing it is to read the opening lines of the final chapters of Ofelia's *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin America*. We finally have some reference to the lives of women and the ways in which the struggle for social justice will look for them. As Ofelia writes:

Economic dependence, political subordination, and cultural marginality—issues of central importance for Latin American theories of cultural identity and liberation—also play a central role in the lives of women, with a significant difference. Women will often experience their negative position not only with respect to a foreign cultural or an exploiting class but within their own culture and class. A woman's economic, social, and political status—if oppressive—is complicated by the factor of gender.¹¹

Simón Bolívar described the situation facing Latin Americans as difficult and complicated, yet he ignored the complications of gender. His neglect of the gender question pervades the Latin American philosophical tradition. As Ofelia indicates:

In Latin America, feminist theory has not advanced as rapidly in philosophy as it has in the social sciences, an area where important topics such as women in society, women in culture, and women in development have been investigated at length from informed gender-conscious perspectives. Prior to the 1980s, when feminist ideas began to gain some ground in philosophy, only one well-known twentieth-century Latin American philosopher had published a book on feminism. This was the Uruguayan Carlos Vaz Ferreira (1872-1958), whose treatise *Sobre feminism* first appeared in 1933.¹²

The work that Ofelia has done to correct the gender gap in the history of Latin American philosophy is part of her general commitment to social change and social justice—her work in philosophy has made the field itself more inclusive and better equipped to address the problem of identity, by carving space for the issue of gender.

Concluding Remarks

Ofelia Schutte has contributed in so many ways to the field of philosophy. I have focused on the work she has done to draw attention to the colonial condition of the *voz latina* in the Latin American philosophical tradition. Ofelia has rescued that *voz* from the darkness of the invisible realm (much as the domestic work of women remained and still remains—something Ofelia addresses at the end of her chapter on feminism). We are indebted to Ofelia's contributions to the history of thought in Latin America, for her contributions have allowed certain voices and certain issues, too long silenced, to be heard again or even for the first time, enabling a more complete account of the most extraordinary and complicated problem of Latina identity to unfold.

Endnotes

1. Review of Ofelia Schutte's "Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (1994): 318-19.
2. Ofelia Schutte, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 4.
3. I am indebted to Amy Oliver for her work on this matter of the missing *Latina* voice. Amy and I co-wrote an article, "Identity and Exclusion in the Latin American Tradition: The Extraordinary and Complicated Position of the *Voz Latina*," and many of the ideas we developed in that paper have shaped this paper.
4. See Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana, or The Traps of Faith*, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
5. Alan S. Trueblood, *A Sor Juana Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 113.
6. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 230.
7. Ofelia Schutte, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 237.
8. *Ibid.*, 237.
9. Simón Bolívar, "Address Delivered at the Inauguration of the Second National Congress of Venezuela at Angostura," in Angostura, February 15, 1819, translated by Lewis Bertrand (New York: Colonial Press, 1951), 69.
10. Bolívar, "Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of This Island [Jamaica]," in Kingston, Jamaica, September 6, 1815, translated by Lewis Bertrand (New York: Colonial Press, 1951), 65-6. Henceforth cited as *Letter*.
11. Ofelia Schutte, *op. cit.*, 208.
12. *Ibid.*, 208.

Critical Genealogies of the History of Latin American Philosophy

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In 2007, Ofelia Schutte published "Postmodernity and Utopia: Reclaiming Feminist Grounds on New Terrains," an essay that appears in the only anthology of its kind available in English dedicated to the study of feminist philosophy in Latin America and Spain.¹ In that paper, Schutte discusses several positions

from Latin American postmodern thinkers regarding the topic of utopian desires and trajectories. She also encourages feminists to reconsider their relationships to political and philosophical strategies that utilize utopian thinking and rationalities. In the same year, Schutte taught a graduate course at the University of South Florida on contemporary scholarship in Latin American philosophy. I was privileged to have been able to attend her seminar that year, and to have been introduced to different figures within Latin American philosophical thought at the beginning of my graduate studies. Before attending graduate school, I had spent some time studying epistemic and political questions pertaining to the topic of social and cultural identities. However, much of this study was often conducted from within the parameters of Anglo-American feminist philosophy. Also, around this time, I had begun confronting limitations within those Anglo-American feminist frameworks, many of which arose from my own lived experiences as a U.S.-born Latina of mixed Central American and Anglo-American parentage. Having been raised between two sets of cultural traditions—those of first- and second-generation immigrants from Panamá and those of working-class white southerners from Virginia—I had often felt what I would later characterize as *el choque* between these separate worlds. Stemming from these experiences, at the beginning of my graduate training in 2007, I had become increasingly frustrated with living in a cultural, historical, and professional context in which seemingly incommensurable worlds could collide so casually, but with such apparent disregard for one another. In that year and the years to follow, my experiences with Ofelia Schutte and her work in the history of Latin American philosophy would change the course of my professional and personal development, including my interests and dedication to Latin American philosophy.

In what follows, I discuss how Schutte's work has provided me with the critical tools to begin investigating historical narratives within Latina American philosophy, and how her work and her presence in academia has facilitated my pursuit of such projects from my own speaking position as a U.S.-born Latina. Through an engagement with the 2007 essay that I mention above, and her 1998 *Hypatia* article titled "Cultural Alterity: Cross-Cultural Communication and Feminist Theory in North-South Contexts," I examine how Schutte's work has helped me forge a bridge between the voice of young Latinas in philosophy like myself and the history of Latin American philosophical thought.² My aims in this paper are twofold. The first is to express my support and gratitude for Schutte's intellectual contributions to the discipline of academic philosophy. My second aim is to demonstrate an appreciation for her influence on my own professional and personal development. As it is certain that I cannot do justice to the entirety of her work and influence in this paper, I hope to offer another voice in solidarity with and in gratitude for the immense changes that she has contributed to my ability to pursue the academic study of philosophy.

First, I would like to start with Schutte's 1998 essay on cultural alterity. The focus of this essay is the development of a methodological comportment that maintains a critical distance in order to respect the epistemic and political boundaries of culturally distinct speaking positions. For my purposes, I would like to focus on cross-cultural communication between Latina feminists in the U.S. and Latin American and Spanish philosophers to examine how Schutte's work facilitates dialogic relations among these groups. As she underscores in her essay, "postcolonial feminism are those feminism that take the experience of Western colonialism and its contemporary effects as a high priority in the process of setting up a speaking position from which to articulate a standpoint of cultural, national, or social identity."³ In the process of articulating my standpoint, I have been privileged to be able to rely on Schutte's conception

of what she calls the principle of cultural incommensurability, and I have taken this notion as a critical method through which to situate my speaking position when inquiring into the history of Latin American philosophy.

Schutte offers two versions of the idea of cross-cultural incommensurability to her readers. The first, a weaker articulation of incommensurability, focuses on the constraints of language and translation. In her essay, Schutte writes that the conveyance of information can be thought of as limited by the existence of cultural differences within the articulation of ideas through natural languages. Although she sees this as a relatively minor point with respect to a more general notion of cross-cultural incommensurability, I think she would agree that the limits of language and translation play a tremendous role in the ability to "maximize intercultural dialogue" between philosophers of the Global South and those of the Global North.⁴ In this sense, the task of inquiring into the histories of various lineages of philosophical thought in Latin America certainly requires some level of competency in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Quechua, or other indigenous languages of Latin America. As we might assume, with any field of study an adequate grasp of the language of articulation of that area of inquiry is necessary to address some level of misinterpretation about the content and methodologies of that discipline.

Yet, I agree with Schutte that a quantitative manner of thinking about cross-cultural incommensurability—i.e., that some amount of cultural difference is left inexpressible in any natural language of articulation—is only a relatively minor aspect of the limitations that cultural alterity presents those of us attempting to engage in intercultural dialogue. A more central (and ethico-political) aspect of the notion of incommensurability is, in her words, "a kind of strangeness" or "displacement" of our usual expectations about ourselves and others that arises through practices of intercultural dialogue.⁵ Through this iteration of incommensurability, Schutte draws on the relevance of cultural and aesthetic distinctions across differing temporalities of colonial influence and modalities of socioeconomic modernization. Developing the notion of multitemporal heterogeneity from Néstor García Canclini, Schutte urges postcolonial feminists to attempt to situate themselves within their own particular nexuses of geopolitical and temporal locations. She then urges us to become attuned to how these differing locations become participants in the circulation of ideas through literary and aesthetic means.

I should note that Schutte's conception of cross-cultural incommensurability is more often discussed in terms of its formulation as a lived practice of communicative interaction. However, I do not think that her view precludes the possibility of engaging in dialogical relations with texts, like those in the history of philosophy, wherein similar hermeneutical tools may be employed. In this sense, the available resources for me as an academic philosopher trained in the United States must be recognized as distinct from those of the individual figures of the history of Latin American philosophy that I study. While it may sound trivial for me to assert, for instance, that my resources as a twenty-first-century Latina feminist philosopher are distinct from those of a nineteenth-century Argentine thinker like, for example, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the stronger sense of incommensurability that Schutte offers her readers provides a rich context from which I can interpret those distinctions.

Consider, for example, how through her critical framework, I am compelled to critically assess the seeming "strangeness" of Sarmiento's 1882 commemorative address of the life of Charles Darwin, a speech wherein Sarmiento describes sexual selection in terms of the feminine coquetry of young women dancing at an aristocratic ball.⁶ Through an inquiry into the modes of

gendered, racialized, and scientific comportments toward the world, both from my available perspective toward myself and from those that appear to be available to Sarmiento, I am confronted with a narrative of aesthetico-political progress and evolutionary development that fails to speak transparently to me as a reader. Rather, as Schutte suggests in her essay, I must strive, in my interactions with Sarmiento's writing, to "relate what is being said to a complex set of signifiers, denoting or somehow pointing to what remains unsaid."⁷ Thus, in situating my perspective in this way, I take up a method through which I can attempt to critically examine not only the specificities of Sarmiento's own views about women's sexuality and the dynamics of racial progress, but I must also critically engage with how my current stances on feminist and queer sexualities and aesthetico-political narratives of progress have shaped my own speaking position.

While an acknowledgement of this speaking position includes investigating my modes of comportment as a critical inquirer, it also allows me to attempt to resist conflating or reducing historical perspectives from non-Western contexts into preexisting categories of thought. Usually such a conflation would subsume other modes of thought under categories already available within traditional frameworks of European and Anglo-American philosophical histories. Rather than reducing the ideas of prominent thinkers from Latin America into reflected or altered versions of a thinker from a dominant culture, recognition of cross-cultural incommensurability recommends that one place a high stake on differences. As such, I can attempt to resist the dangerous dilemma of treating culturally different "others" as either speaking nonsense or as simply giving voice to an idea with which I am already familiar. In this sense, my current research within Latin American thought has been facilitated by retaining a level of "unfamiliarity," or what Doris Sommer has described as the "limits of intimacy" between myself and the texts that I engage.⁸ Thus, my ability to articulate a critical perspective toward various narratives of history within Latin American thought from the position of a U.S.-trained philosopher is always grounded in a profound willingness to continue to learn new ways of listening to resonances of cultural difference.

With these hermeneutical tools in mind, Schutte's writings and encouragement have also aided me in maintaining a critical perspective in order to facilitate dialogue with contemporary Latin American and Spanish philosophers as well. That is, my critical engagements with the history of Latin American thought is informed by and developed through conversations with contemporary voices regarding political and cultural projects within Latin America and Spain. Here, again, the hermeneutic and epistemic resources offered through Schutte's writings on cultural alterity pose perspectives through which I can strive to "negotiate" a feminist cross-cultural communication.⁹ Recognizing my relative privilege with respect to my lived embodiment, geopolitical locality, and economic resources are among the ways in which I must configure the feminist narratives of solidarity and agency through which I engage in the critical analysis of the history of philosophy. Furthermore, through my engagements with others taking up critical projects in history of Latin American philosophy, including Schutte's own groundbreaking work, I am beginning to be able to situate my voice within these dialogues and explore new ground in areas of inquiry where research has yet to be conducted in the United States.

This dialogical relation with other feminisms and philosophical voices brings me back to the topic of Schutte's 2007 essay. In the process of coming to interpret my own speaking position, I have looked to Schutte's work to help

me assess my own engagement with narratives of political progress. Akin to the postmodern thinkers that she discusses in her work, I too am critical of the meta-narratives of emancipation that have been voiced through discourses of modernity. Indeed, this critical position has been a central aspect of my own interests in early modern European thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is precisely because these grandiose meta-narratives of progress and emancipation have had such a tremendous impact on the shaping of Western political and social philosophy that I then feel compelled to critically interrogate their applications and limitations. Yet, when I first began to study nineteenth-century iterations of positivism in Latin America, I was confronted with narratives of progress and emancipation that did not correspond neatly with the narratives from the Western philosophical traditions with which I was familiar. *Prima facie*, one might assume, for example, that the explicit confidence in the historical force of scientific thought that is characteristic of Sarmiento's later writings is similar or even identical to the scientism of other positivist thinkers of the nineteenth century. However, through further investigation into Sarmiento's corpus, I have often been confronted with philosophical and political projects that I have not seen mirrored elsewhere in the history of ideas. Sarmiento, although we may still characterize him as a confident believer in the promises of scientific knowledge and development, was also nonetheless articulating a distinct narrative of progress that was in dialogue with other notions of positive rationality of the nineteenth century. For instance, as Adriana Novoa and Alex Levine claim, of particular importance to the Argentine context is the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory, which brought distinct philosophical questions to bear on the shape that positivist ideas would take in the nation's narrative of progress.¹⁰ What this meant for Sarmiento, in particular, was that he had to restructure his ideas about social and political development to accommodate prominent evolutionary theories circulating in the late nineteenth century. Put more concretely, he had to reshape his previous notions of social evolution, i.e., which held aesthetics and rationality as the driving forces of social change, and eventually turn to a view of evolution that integrated elements of Darwinian sexual and natural selection. Moreover, although Sarmiento never publicly endorsed the conception of radical historical contingency that is fundamental to Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, he took great pains to explain how the civilizing projects that he held out hope for in his earlier works could be remodeled through the lens of Darwinism.¹¹ One example of this is the account of sexual selection that I mention above, wherein romantic ideals of beauty and harmony give voice to Sarmiento's strained attempts to preserve a nationalist project of social evolution alongside the emerging scientific literature of his day.

What such cases illustrate is that in our assessments of narratives of social progress, we cannot assume that the models for political and rational development within the history of Latin American philosophy have unfolded congruently alongside seemingly similar models in the history of traditional Western philosophy. As such, the handling of a notion such as "positivism" also demands a polyphonic register through which we can make sense of its varied dimensions within Latin American thought. As Meri L. Clark observes in her essay on Latin American positivism in the recent Blackwell *Companion to Latin American Philosophy* (co-edited by Schutte), positivism took many divergent and unique forms in Latin America. She states of the Argentine context that a national struggle for liberalism and for the amelioration of social and racial forms of "degeneracy" marked the unique ways in which Sarmiento would recognize his ideals of social change for the nation.¹²

These comments about positivism then lend further credence to Schutte's discussion in "Postmodernity and Utopia." Namely, they support her claim that resisting the "homogenizing forces" of the West, even in postmodern critiques of utopian thinking, requires that we pluralize and allow for a sense of unfamiliarity with the strategies through which cultural critique may take place. That is, although I retain a feminist, queer, and anti-racist stance toward many of the narratives of progress to which Sarmiento gave voice, I can interpret the nuances and relative distinctiveness of his views as a way of acknowledging the limits of intimacy that I, as a U.S. Latina, can have with the history of Argentine philosophical thought. In addition, my critical perspective towards the gendered and racial aspect of Sarmiento's writing illuminate to me a critical narrative of progress that may influence women and feminists within Argentina today. Thus, the modes of comportment through which I can engage feminism in Argentina are further enriched through layers of cultural history, making the simple conflation between my projects and their own much more difficult. As such, Argentine feminist and pro-women projects that embody political resistance and/or cultural critique through utopian or other models of rationalities cannot be conflated with the political and philosophical resonances of utopian narratives in the Global North. I then interpret narratives of progress and the geopolitical spaces through which cultural alterity becomes salient as one way of attending to contemporary models of political organization from Latin America.

Finally, before I close today, I would like to briefly mention the work that still lies ahead for those of us attempting to honor Schutte's legacy. As it became clear to me in the years that followed that seminar in 2007, the critical scholarship that needs to be done within academic philosophy in the United States is just beginning to emerge. While the recent publication of the *Companion to Latin American Philosophy* is a milestone in this field, it is important to continue to engage this work as a reference text. That is, for those of us dedicated to continuing a dialogue with Latin American philosophers it is important that we continue to approach the writings in this anthology as bridgework for new avenues of inquiry. What lies ahead are transformation and reclamation projects that critically engage non-dominant modes of articulation, both from within and outside the Global North. Among the resources that I have begun to gather are critical tools from Latina and Chicana feminist thinkers and from critical race theorists. Such tools, I hope, will provide me with strategies to destabilize and decenter the hegemonic speaking positions of U.S. philosophical discourse. This would include, as Schutte suggests, decentering my own speaking position to allow the marking of my always already limited sexual, cultural, racial, ethnic, and historical horizons of intelligibility.¹³ For my current projects in academia, this process of comportment towards oneself as a de-centered subject of cultural difference will take place through formulating critical genealogies of the history of Latin American thought. For others, this may occur via alternate means. Yet, in any register of articulation, as Schutte concludes in her 1998 essay, "A challenging but not impossible task lies ahead. This is why the struggle continues."¹⁴

Endnotes

1. Ofelia Schutte, "Feminist Philosophy in Latin America and Spain," in *Feminist Philosophy in Latin America and Spain*, edited by María Luisa Femenías and Amy A. Oliver (New York: Rodopi, 2007).
2. Ofelia Schutte, "Cultural Alterity: Cross-Cultural Communication and Feminist Theory in North-South Contexts," *Hypatia* 13, no. 2 (1998): 53-72.
3. Schutte 1998, 65.
4. *Ibid.*, 56.

5. *Ibid.*
6. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Obras completas de D.F. Sarmiento Tomo XXII: Discursos populares, segundo volumen* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Mariano Moreno, 1899), 129-30.
7. Schutte 1998, 61-62.
8. Doris Sommer. *Proceed with Caution when Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), xii.
9. Schutte 1998, 58.
10. Adriana Novoa and Alex Levine, *From Man to Ape: Darwinism in Argentina, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
11. *Ibid.*, 169-170.
12. Meri L. Clark, "The Emergence and Transformation of Positivism," *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*, edited by Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno (Blackwell Publishing: Blackwell Reference Online, 2010), 59.
13. Schutte 1998, 54.
14. *Ibid.*, 69.

Radical Pluralism: On Finding One's Voice in Professional Philosophy

An Essay in Honor of Ofelia Schutte

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On occasions such as these, when what is most easily noticed is the seamless outcome of hectic and laborious planning, when what is reflected upon is not the temporal fractures or alienating moments of professional life, but rather the hindsight view of what has become an eminent scholar's memorable career, it becomes difficult to remember just how precarious, how far from certain the paths that led to this moment really were, and how difficult it was to navigate those natal waters of existence without feeling the pull, the incredible strain of having no model to look to for guidance along the way. This is how I think of the courageous career of my teacher, Ofelia Schutte, for whom this essay is written.

Writing about one's mentors is a difficult task. First, writing in general is difficult; it disciplines our voices to project a conversation one has already had with an imaginary audience, which, like a shifting landscape—becomes increasingly made up of specialized interlocutors as one matures into a professional discourse. If we have been trained "correctly," we begin, in time, writing not for our peers (even less for ourselves) but for those for whom we *wish* our peers to be, the luminaries we pre-consciously project as the hallmarks of what our voices ought to say, to be, if we are to be taken seriously as "professionals" in our field, or to ascend in it. But if the authoritative voices, chronicles, and narratives of our discipline are historically dominated by perspectives that—unwittingly or not—privilege disembodied, synchronic, dualistic principles in writing, it becomes even more difficult to give an account of human relationships in their fulsome complexity, to describe the polyvalent experience of a professional connection anchored in care, trust, nurture, friendship, and deep affection (*cariño*). And then of course there is the issue of doing justice to the gifts and labors of one's mentors. Have we said too little, too much—is the account truly about *their* work and influence or one's own narrative reworking of transitional experiences in our psyche: a secret act of self-mapping that renders the fragmented whole, that makes the "self" transparent to the self so as to speak coherently about it in the language we've been given? Is it they

we truly speak of, or simply our sense of gratitude that through them, we speak at all?

Then there is the fear. And there is always fear. Fear of disappointing, falling short of anticipations, fear of—in the language of faculty annual reports—“not meeting expectations.” We worry that our flaws and scholarly shortcomings will be debited on their ledger as failings, or that one has departed too far from the positions of one’s teacher, conflated their voice with one’s own and misapplied it in descriptions of their work. Will others who have helped and nurtured us resent the univocal narrative, the accolades that rightfully belong to the vast network of social tissue that formed around us when we thought it could not be done, that breathed for us when we thought our talents did not suffice, could not surmount? Yes, fear alone puts a powerful barrier before writing, about one’s mentors and in general. There are so many reasons not to write, so many paralytics that surround us. And if we have truly understood the problem of language, even the best among us would abandon our attempts at worldly description and halt at the threshold of a door we’re told is ours. Silence would be our speech.

But that is not a lesson I was taught. *Así no me enseñaste, Ofelia*. I was taught to insist that all that moves and concerns us be given a voice, that the subaudible be brought to bear as a question pressed before the audible in our discipline, and that, despite all evidence to the contrary, methodologies exist to aid in the endeavor. Whether we create them by braiding strands from different genealogical spools or excavate the global South for ready-made ones, let no one say we are without resources and articulative possibilities. Despair is not an option, especially for those in despair. So yes, writing limits the extent to which deep ambiguity and the felt contradictions of experience can be captured in logical form. And that is why mentorship saves, the way poetry can sometimes save.

In the right place, at the right time, during the right conditions and with no measure of guaranteed meaning, it can attempt to give words and comfort to an otherwise disjointed experience, to describe for us the conflict, the “*choques*” and epistemic strains that haunt our daylight personas—the voice we must often present to our discipline in order to be heard at all, and for which we seem to have no confidence as students, especially when our voices are marked by ethnic, racial, gendered, and sexual differences unrecognized in the neutered dialect of abstract, logical principles.

I characterize Ofelia’s career as courageous precisely because she never felt the need to present any voice other than her own amidst a cacophony of well-disciplined voices, to assuage its difference or describe it on the basis of principles of authenticity, unity, correctness, bravery, or steadfastness. It was a call of conscience she could not suppress, ignore, and that is all. For those of us who, as students, felt muted by a field we both suffered from and loved, her voice personified the belief, the resolute insistence that the normative status of a practice in philosophy alone is no confirmation of its validity, and that objections must be brought by those who feel excluded by those norms: if conditions are not maximally suited to express our dissent, we must work to change them. That is what a philosopher does.

Under her mentorship at the University of South Florida, I watched for years as she objected, time and again, for herself and on behalf of those who could not yet take the professional risks, or whose personal dispositions prevented it. And the admiration for such acts made it easy to overlook the price often paid for acts of vocal fortitude: the professional alienation, stress, and bodily burden that comes with disciplinary dissent. We forget the quantum of energy and psychic strain that must be borne to defend the things we feel should need no defense.

The price we pay for our politics when our very bodies make the commitment for us.

Some of us here today saw glimmers of these epistemic strains just this week when attending a talk on immigration by Seyla Benhabib, in which the first question a philosopher thought to ask her involved the correlation—or need to disambiguate—immigrants from invaders, as if the symbolic imaginary of the immigrant subject was predicated on what the ancient Greeks called the *atopon*—the strange—as a threatening *outsider* (we should remember that the terms “barbarity” and “barbarian” derive from Ancient Greek ideophones describing the sound impressions of foreigner’s languages to Greek ears). That this philosopher was a colleague in Ofelia’s own department, that this philosopher had left the room by the time she stood up and calmly made transparent the implicit biases in the question itself—seemed of no great surprise to her, no terrible strain or small traumata on her psyche. After all, she’d had some practice. Speaking of her former institution, she recounts:

One of my UF colleagues published a book where he tried to prove that there is no continental philosophy worthy of its name at the end of the twentieth century. What a futile endeavor! Does anyone really believe that a field’s contributions to knowledge can be dismissed so easily or that reality can vanish when it becomes inconvenient for people to acknowledge it? I suppose I was also expected to do my colleague the favor of disappearing from view, since my very presence as an active and engaged philosopher in the department put in question the adequacy of the conceptual framework on which he relied.¹

Following the talk, and a bit shortsightedly, I asked her: “How do you bear it?” And she replied, as if she were jovially introducing a punch line, “Oh that’s simple; I’m retiring!” And this was not so much a direct reply to the present question, but a pronouncement on the panoptic span of a career in professional philosophy as a Cuban woman writing on issues and thinkers traditionally excluded from the discipline.

And so if it is true, as Nietzsche says, that “everything decisive comes into being *in spite of*,”² Ofelia Schutte’s contributions to philosophy are truly *decisive* testaments to the courageous pursuit of a pluralism beyond pluralism—one that does not simply accommodate voices, but rather undermines normative ones to lessen the burden of proof on marginalized ones to be heard *as* voices in the first place. For this, I thank her.

I thank her because, following Nietzsche’s insight that “it is something to give voice to such sphinxlike and mute problems as mine,”³—Ofelia’s pioneering work allowed philosophers like me to give voice to the psychic toll that comes with concerning yourself with issues that are historically not seen as philosophic concerns, with the burden of developing a philosophic voice and scholarly identity using conceptual resources built on *exclusionary logics* that privilege the identity of the field’s historically Anglophone practitioners—logics which one must demonstrate mastery in if one is to be officially initiated as a professional practitioner in the field—i.e., to get a job, with benefits. Indeed, before Ofelia, no one had brought up the issue of developing a “philosophical voice” to me at all, and why would one, as so much of our work as philosophers in training has to do with mastering the Western philosophical cannon and deploying the analytic tools of argumentative reasoning to debate questions internal to the canon itself? To building Turing machines, designing thought experiments, or finding novelty in new approaches to established questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and logic? In a recent interview,

Linda Alcoff sheds light on the gendered politics of this problem when reminiscing about her own experiences entering the profession: she recounts that “although [I was] drawn to feminist philosophy, I decided not to risk my children’s future with a dissertation in an area so marginal to the discipline.”⁴ For devoting a career to pluralizing the practice of philosophy, so that her students would not bear the same risks or have to use such a terrible mathematics to calculate their future in the profession, I am profoundly thankful to Ofelia, and to the distinguished scholars that join us here today in celebrating her career.

I thank her because I recognize the unique nature of the epistemic space she provided for me in philosophy, a conceptual home in which to grow, learn, and practice the skills she knew would be key for successful entry into professional philosophy; skills like a double-edged voice that could be used to communicate with mainstream philosophers without totalizing over the irreducible imprint of difference—and the demand for change—that informed my analyses of culture as well as my own philosophic voice. I thank her for teaching me that clarity, like sound argumentative reasoning, was no *virtue*: it was a *tactic*, one among many, that could prove essential in maneuvering through seismically restrictive spaces and logic-based language games in philosophy (if only to get out of them), and for that reason alone had to be learned well: never as a marker of identity, but as a tool. Clarity, rigor—but *in the service of life*. Here was a Nietzschean through and through, one who laid out small alphabets of survival on a daily basis for me, little morsels of strength like the slave Caliban’s words to his master: “you have taught me language, and my profit is, I know how to curse.” For teaching me to curse in a language that could be understood as cursing, and so disburdening me of the terrible weight *the feeling of voicelessness* carries with it, I thank her.

But indebtedness has its price, especially in a protestant culture. I have often been told that I have somatically intertwined Ofelia’s voice with my own, that my projects and concerns mirror her own, as if acknowledging the trellis that supports how the arbor may grow were somehow detrimental in the development of an “authentic” professional voice. This is also not a lesson I was taught. To sever and amputate the incarnate attachments that provide the nutriment on which memory-work and the worldly narrative of our selfhood subsists—on which our lived-concerns acquire onomastic span, on which our lived-philosophy grows. Philosophy privileges solitary work. It privileges the solitary thinker untethered, fundamentally *unbound* to the network of maieutic accents and tones that, like sonar, work tacitly in the background to give our multiplicity of selves an invisible net to rebound from—a vast tympanic well in which what goes in returns as a single, unified self we can present (illusorily, of course) in name. (And that too, saves—*Phone Semantike* saves when the urgency of our concerns must acquire a readable code.) So that when I say I am deeply indebted—that my voice is indeed intertwined—it is no act of self-abasement, but a small act of civil disobedience in philosophy, an act that gathers what is nested, tethered, dependent, fractured, and bound; a whole feminist ethics of care that says, *this too, belongs*. My teacher belongs. My mother belongs. My fears and shadows and uncertainties that fragment, but which should not be severed away for lack of a language capable of capturing them—belong.

But here I am straying from my own experience. To better appreciate the nature of my indebtedness to Ofelia, especially on this issue of voice, I must say a few things about my academic background. I went to graduate school on a full fellowship for poetry, not because I had not encountered philosophy (indeed I had a B.A. in it), but perhaps too much of what was

passing at the time for it . . . and found, in sum, that it could not adequately account for me, for my situated concerns that included the transnational experience of exile, migration, bodily illness, gender and economic inequity, linguistic difference, and psychic trauma, among other things. Philosophy, it seemed to me, was a symbolic field that operated under the purview of entrenched parameters that privileged what appears over what does not, that privileged a substance ontology based on notions of stability and continuity; and where the most it could say about discontinuity and rupture was to theorize the structures of experience that disclose the experience of stability in the first place, so as to explain *discontinuity* in *cognitively rich terms*. For those that have undergone trauma and are perhaps mistrustful of the overestimation in value given to such accounts of lived experience, this disjunction between life and its philosophical recoding into a stable symbolic form often fails to heal, and can itself be a new wound. In her essay, “Wounds of Self: Experience, Word, Image, and Identity,” Mariana Ortega writes beautifully on this issue, demanding that *our phenomenological descriptions do justice to the lives we live*.⁵ And so, for those of us for whom situated, lived-experience *guides* philosophic inquiry, the task of extirpating bodily, incarnate, or otherwise “ontic” features of lived experience—or recoding them through *cognitively rich* characterizations of experience in order to be validated *as* philosophic concerns—often comes at a terrible price, because it generally restricts one to speak through a voice that is already value-laden with assumptions about the nature of the world or experience that are not guided by, but are *co-extensive with Reason*.

This is something that Ofelia’s work helped disburden me of; the need to triangulate my concerns with the interlocutor of Reason as it has come to be understood in the Western philosophical tradition, so that when Plato asks, in the *Phaedrus*, “Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature?”⁶ I did not have to recode my own self-understanding though a divine and gentle nature that was contradicted at every moment by experience. She helped me contextualize philosophy within a lived phenomenology so that I could reframe the canon through an existential lens. For not upholding abstract universals and the fulfillment of conditions for semantic truth as cornerstones of philosophic thinking, but, instead, as modalities of a larger social practice—one rooted in a particular cultural history—I thank her.

But this pluralistic stance towards the philosophic canon, however liberating for many of Ofelia’s students, was also a double-edged sword in the classroom. I watched for years as Ofelia, with the greatest calm and ease, responded to hostile, Anglocentric, ethnocentric, logocentric, questions from frustrated graduate students whose cognitive and narrative expectations were not being fulfilled—either because she infused “the canon” with readings from feminist, post-colonial, or Latin American philosophers, or because her teaching style differed from the traditional, top-down authorial posture of most graduate lecturers. One year, in a Nietzsche seminar, I recall a student combatively complaining that Nietzsche was totally incomprehensible, insofar as he relied on non-normative logic, which, he declared, was unnecessarily convoluted and thus philosophically valueless. With a monastically warm tone Ofelia simply shrugged her shoulders and replied: “Well, perhaps you just haven’t suffered enough yet.” Before Ofelia introduced me to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Susan Brison, Mariana Ortega, and other great writers to speak on the subject of liminality, exclusion, and psychic pain, I took refuge in Nietzsche’s works—as many of you here know, so that when Ofelia responded to that question I knew she could do what philosophy had not yet been able to: speak to my embodied concerns.

Part of this ability came from the almost inconceivable breadth and range of her work; her areas of specialization were anything that became necessary to master in order to address her philosophic questions, which emanated from her specific experience in the world: Existentialism, Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis, Latin American Philosophy and Social Theory, French Feminism, Latina and women-of-color Feminism, Hermeneutics, along with a bilingual publication history that ranged from *Hypatia* to *Rutgers Law Review*.

And indeed, many of her students went to her for guidance on areas outside of Latin American philosophy, as her primary teaching load at the time centered on Existentialism, Feminism, and Socio-political philosophy. It was not until 2007 that she taught the first graduate seminar on Latin American Philosophy at USF. Despite her distinguished record of publications in the field and being in a hospitable working environment to non-Western philosophy, the course came to fruition only after a cohort of graduate students drafted a petition and acquired signatures of students who would commit to enrollment if the course was offered. The course was filled to capacity. Even there, however, there were tensions. I recall a question from a graduate student on whether or not Christopher Columbus should be celebrated, at the very least, as a cultural signifier for Anglosaxon culture, because he gave white Protestants and Catholics a sense of “home” in America (it was a loaded question). Fully composed she began her reply by saying, “well, I was going to agree with something that you didn’t say...” Yes, it was a bit like Jedi training. Under her I learned to surmount the feeling of vocal paralysis, to quell the fear and frustration or the desire to respond to every ethnocentric question by reading the Zapatista’s manifesto aloud. Not only could that intensity not be sustained, it was counter-productive. It is because of her that I now write when I otherwise would weep.

And so you see, although I know she would disagree with this, I have always been adamant that but for Ofelia’s guidance through the doctorate in philosophy, I would not have finished. Not for lack of talent or tenacity, but because the present juncture of professional philosophy, as it is embodied in graduate curricula and prerequisites, so profoundly alienated me from the concerns of lived experience, with the calls of conscience that emanate from our embeddedness in culture and our braided, woven relationships with others. This is something Ofelia was keenly aware of as a mentor—the importance of life and the need to harmonize it with philosophy. When too much time had passed since last seeing my partner, who taught at a university 130 miles away, she reminded me to forgo what always felt like more immediate tasks and return home for a walk with him in a garden. When I was ill, writing my comp exams from a hospital room or dissertating my way to a pulmonary embolism, she forced me to care for the one body but for which one could not dissertate, to name the injury and irony that is writing about bodily presence when one refuses to care for one’s own. If I spoke about the restrictive logic of performative contradictions in my writing, at the very least, I shouldn’t perform one with my body. She alone reminded me of life’s interrelatedness with philosophy. In her autobiographical essay, “Philosophy and Life: A Singular Case of Their Interconnection,” Ofelia tells of the experience of caring for her aging mother, an account which has always stayed with me as a source of influence. She writes:

None of my philosophy colleagues understood what I went through during this period. In the official view, philosophy was the logical analysis of statements and concepts. Life, existential pain, dementia, or caring for those in desperate need of attention had purportedly nothing to do with philosophy. For me, though, philosophy was of the essence in how I responded

to this situation of critical need. My background in phenomenology and my interests in psychoanalysis and the unconscious carried me through this period. When my mother’s discourse lost “rational” meaning, I looked for meaning in partial images and sentence fragments...the fact that I was able to maintain a close and communicative relationship with my mother throughout the five and a half years she was ill proves to me that the methods of reasoning I had learned in hermeneutics and continental philosophy were far superior in addressing care-oriented relationships of the kind that touched my life.⁷

It is in this context of shared affinities for the methodological perspectives of continental philosophy, moreover, that I was able to formulate what became the central question of my graduate career: *With what language can one express what language does not disclose to express?* But I could not have done this without the conceptually rich fabric of terms like cultural alterity, transtextuality, and non-normative heterosexuality (among many others) that come from Ofelia’s work. Her interdisciplinary voice and mentorship opened up paths for philosophic thinking that allowed me to conceptualize alternatives to mainstream philosophic discourse—that forced me to make those first wingless flights and attempts to speak in my own, double-edged voice. I thank her for the tremendous amount of care, nurture, psychic energy, and time she devoted to my development, efforts that allowed me to stand on my own and embrace the poet Edith Södergran’s insight: “my self-confidence depends on the fact that I have discovered my dimensions. It does not become me to make myself less than I am.”⁸

This is how I look at the courageous career of my teacher and friend, Ofelia Schutte, whom as we sit here today would not want praise from a former student, but instead to see them flourishing and attaining their own philosophic voice, perhaps even with the hope that someday soon, they too surpass her. After all, as Nietzsche says, “one repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil.”⁹

And as for the students with us here today: many of you came hoping I would redeem the title of this talk and answer, how, exactly, one can find one’s voice in philosophy. I know you like answers. That your estimation of me grows in proportion with your perception of my ability to provide them, to craft them in response to what you accept as the questions worth asking on account of their history—the simple fact that philosophers before you have asked them. But I’m afraid the answer can’t be given a logical form. Sure, we can disambiguate the terms involved (“voice” and “philosophy”), offer stipulative definitions and construct a suitable response for professional purposes. But that is not the voice of which I speak, the voice which cannot emerge on call but appears (at best) when the critical need for it arises in our bodies, when the cavernous fissure between our experience of what is the case and what is sought seems momentarily emendable through the skills and tactics our training has bestowed. It is, in so many ways, an existential matter of luck. The way it was an absurd matter of chance that on a mid-September morning twenty some years ago, when a subterranean plate shifted violently beneath Mexico City, toppling every act of human effort and resilience within radius, Ofelia and I were only blocks apart, each tremor (the screams, the silence, the blood) encoding a different stamp on our memories. So that years later when I responded to philosophic concerns with profound suspicions that *no, the center does not hold*, she needed no explanations and instead offered the precise amalgam of readings, writers, and philosophies capable of responding to such a call.

So no, there is no guarantee that one will find one's voice in philosophy, or that what is found can be tested against some standard that confirms the purity of the correspondence between "self" and "voice." But if what I have said about writing and the problem of language rings true at all, then we must also acknowledge that this response too cannot suffice, that absurd silence and existential hope is not always an option for those most silenced by history or who live on the margins of optimism as a direct consequence of neoliberal aggression or forces that generate cultural exclusions on the basis of race, economic status, sexual difference, legal status, and more. After all, part of why Ofelia's mentorship harmonized with my interests had to do not with incommensurable factors, but with her concrete embodied experience as an immigrant, a woman-of-color, a Latina in the U.S.— so that it is no small thing to insist that philosophy departments heed the importance of diversity and pluralism in hiring decisions. That our mentors include those capable of embodying concerns that emanate from our lives, our stories, our fractured sense of home. And we must not wait for this to be done. Already a vast network of senior and emerging scholars have been working to ensure that we lift as we climb, that the cracks not become too wide or the weight too much...that as many as possible traverse the gap and emerge on the other side, with letters appended to their name, not with luck but with joy, with pride. One need not work directly under a scholar like Ofelia to benefit from their guidance (and there are too many to name here, too many to thank)—those whose every word of encouragement becomes like a secret locket we keep and return to when our confidence is most alone.

So yes. Then no. Then yes: in distress, we go on. That is the sense we have tried to create here today. Our philosophy without borders insists that the question of voice be above all a question to be actively lived, cultivated, and *asked* as part of the training of philosophers today, even though we know how far from certain that is to become. Our experience alone of the politics of professional Anglo-American philosophy tells us of the immense difficulties of such a task. As Sappho writes: "I seek, I strive" —*followed by an infinite blank*. Do we thus become overwhelmed by the void, the fragment, the blank? Or do we insist that this gap, this rudderless narrative space be transformed into an opening, a passage through which what sails can acquire the vocalic dimension necessary to do justice to the lives we live? And who is to decide what qualifies as voice, as narrative, as having sailed through? So many new questions result from our demands, from our calls for change . . . so many problems remain. But how could I do otherwise? You see, that is how I was trained.

Endnotes

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2. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann, (NY: Random House, 2000), 753.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 258.
4. Linda M. Alcoff, Interview. *New APPS: Art, Politics, Philosophy, Science*, April 4, 2012. <http://www.newappsblog.com/2012/04/new-apps-interview-linda-alcoff.html>.
5. Mariana Ortega, "Wounds of Self: Experience, Word, Image, and Identity," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22, no. 4 (2008): 235-47.
6. Plato, "Phaedrus," in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper and translated by Alexandre Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 510.
7. Schutte, "Philosophy and Life," 131-32.
8. Edith Södergran, "Introduction to September Lyre," in *Complete Poems*, edited and translated by David McDuff (London: Bloodaxe Books, 1984).
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (NY: The Viking Press, 1968), 190.

On Split Subjects and Differences within Latina Feminism

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In these short fifteen minutes, it would be quite difficult to explain in detail the many ways in which the work of Ofelia Schutte has been an inspiration and how my interaction with Ofelia has helped me understand the kind of philosopher that I wish to be. I will thus first make some brief remarks about how her work has influenced the way in which I understand Latina Feminism and the way in which her phenomenological explorations and personal narratives have helped me navigate the difficult terrain of academic philosophy. Lastly, I would like to make some remarks about Ofelia the person—and why I consider her one of my models as a woman and as a feminist philosopher. Please note that in organizing my remarks in these three categories, it is not my intention here to make a strict separation of Ofelia's work from Ofelia the person. Rather, her theory and her practice must be understood together, as she is one of those rare philosophers whose personal and philosophical practices exemplify her theoretical commitments—something that is increasingly not the case as academic feminism itself becomes absorbed into capitalist practices and acts of self-promotion. Ofelia, however, speaking from her position of a split subject and calling us to view ourselves as subjects of cultural difference rather than enlightened, modern subjects, lives her theories. By doing so, she prompts us to examine our own positions as thinkers and the relation of our thought to the actual, lived experience of the so many so-called "others" whose cultural difference has been rejected, undermined, or ignored by dominant groups but whose "multiple layers" stand to help us realize the vision of a truly inclusive, global feminist ethics, for, as Ofelia says, our selves' multiple layers "lay the groundwork for cognitive, perceptual, and linguistically constituted relations between ourselves and others where the other's differences, even if not fully translatable into the terms of our own cultural horizons, can be acknowledged as sites of appreciation, desire, recognition, caring, and respect" (Schutte 1998, 58).

Reflections on Latina Feminism

I still remember the day when a colleague who teaches in the Languages and Communication department at my university showed me the text, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (SUNY, 1993). It was late 1996 and I was relatively fresh out of a graduate school in which I had done work on Heidegger because I had become interested in phenomenological accounts of self, in particular the Heideggerian account of being-in-the-world. I remember saying, "a Latina philosopher! And she is writing about Latin American philosophers and Latin American feminism!!!!" I remember reading this text and reading about Latin American philosophers such as Ramos and Zea but I remember being particularly moved by the chapter on feminist theory that highlights the interrelatedness of political, economic factors, and questions about gender and cultural identity in the lives of

Latin American women. For someone who had been isolated in a graduate department in which I was the only Latina and in which there were no faculty women of color and which did not offer courses on feminism or in Latin American philosophy, Ofelia's *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* was an eye-opening, life-changing, and intellectually momentous experience. Sometime later, I was introduced to María Lugones' work and I proceeded to read writings by Latinas and other women of color on my own, not an easy task as there were not many around me who were interested in the work by women of color and with whom I could engage in discussion—it was thus a very lonely journey.

Now my journey on Latina feminism has become less lonely. However, the more I have read Latina feminist writings, the more I have found myself caught in between certain boundaries and borders within Latina feminism that I find incredibly troublesome especially as I think of the theme of this symposium, "Philosophy Without Borders." Thankfully, Ofelia's thought has given me insight as to how to deal with the demarcations of territories within Latina feminism. Let me explain. In my attempt to work out a theory of self that is inspired by Heideggerian phenomenology and what I call Latina feminist phenomenologies and in my interactions with Latina feminists in running the Roundtable on Latina Feminism, I have found established territories within Latina feminism with particular borders and particular skirmishes. There are tensions between Postpositive Realists (Moya), Realists (Martín Alcoff), and Postmodern and Poststructuralist views (Alarcón, Sandoval, Schutte), as well as Ontological pluralists (Lugones) and what I call Integrationists (Moya, Barvosa), etc. What is a Latina feminist to do? Must she align herself to any of these particular positions? What consequences follow from such an alignment?

It is important to note that having a choice between different positions within Latina feminism is itself positive in the sense that there are various Latina feminist views rather than the illusory homogeneous Latina feminist stance that is sometimes assumed by uncritical white feminists. The concern, however, is the way the debate has been framed, borders have been assigned, and certain ways of thinking have been kicked out of certain territories. Consider Paula Moya's account of postpositive realism inspired by Satya Mohanty's work, an important contribution to understandings of identity given its disclosure and emphasis on the connection between identity, social location, and epistemic claims but that nevertheless makes what I think are some problematic claims for those of us interested in alleviating oppression and injustices in our communities. When explaining the strength of her position Moya states,

If we choose the realist approach, we will work to ground the complex and variable experiences of the women who take on the identity Chicana within the concrete historical and material conditions they inhabit. Rather than a figure of contradiction or oppositionality, the "Chicana" would be a part of a believable and progressive social theory. I would like to suggest that *it is only* when we have a realist account of our identities, one that refers outward to the world we live in, will we be able to understand what social and political possibilities are open to us for the purpose of working to build a better society (my emphasis). (Moya 2002, 99)

Only a realist account yields understanding of the social and political possibilities that are open to us? As helpful as postpositivist realist interventions may be, especially in regards to bringing to light the relation between identity and epistemic claims and issues concerning epistemic privilege, it

is unfortunate and misguided to claim that this is the only theory that would be helpful to Latina feminists.

For postpositive realists and some realists, postmodern positions or theories that have postmodern elements leave us, in their view, as fragmented or contradictory beings, making wrong claims, and choosing identities without regard to our materiality and cultural context (Moya 2002, 99, 24, 45). The Latina feminist positions that are admired on this camp are admired for their so-called realist commitments—for example, according to Moya, Moraga's view is on the right side as she reminds of us of the theory in the flesh and even Anzaldúa's account of *la facultad* is reinterpreted as a realist position (Moya 2002, 45, 94, 86). In this view, Alarcón's view of subject-in-process, and Sandoval's theory of oppositional consciousness are on the wrong side given their postmodernist leanings (Moya 2002, Ch. 2). Interestingly, issues in earlier feminist debates between postmodernist and nonpostmodernist feminists are reappearing in new ways within Latina feminism. While postpositivist realists and realists are more vocal about their opposition to postmodernism, Latina feminists that find inspiration in postmodern and poststructuralist ideas are not explicitly engaging with so-called postpositive realist or realist positions despite their opposition to them (Ofelia's work is a notable exception here and I am currently working on a critical analysis of Moya's postpositive realism in which I point to both constructive as well as negative aspects of this theory). It is my hope that as Latina feminists we do not get trapped within this particular debate and simply ally ourselves with one position or another but that we read across our differences, find the value of alternative positions, and craft our theories not only with attention to earlier Latina feminist contributions but also with new insights.

Let us also consider Ofelia's comments on Martín Alcoff's *Visible Identities, Race, Gender, and the Self* (2006) in which she identifies what she calls the "causal connection claim" in Martín Alcoff's view—that there is a link between epistemic explanations and the efficacy of political action. Here Ofelia Schutte's words are of utmost importance. When analyzing the causal connection claim in Martín Alcoff's work she states,

My own belief is that identity politics is important because if we believe in equality, we need to stop the injustice against groups that have been the target of serious prejudice. I don't think, however, that it is necessary to agree on a theory of identity in order to join together politically to struggle for a worthy political end. While I think it is very important to document how racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so on, hurt individuals and turn them into second- or third-class citizens, appealing to people's ability to care about eliminating injustice does not require that we share the same meanings regarding ontology, hermeneutics, a philosophy of perception, and so on. (Schutte 2009, 33)

Schutte goes on to warn us that social movements and what she calls various manifestations of identity politics do not require that participants agree on metaphysical, religious, psychological, epistemic, or other understandings of identity. And she adds,

In fact, I would go farther than this, insofar as I believe that it would be actually dangerous to our freedom of thought, inquiry, and action, that individuals supporting some form of group identity politics should agree epistemically on whether they are realists or idealists, whether the self is a substance or a process, or whether there is such a thing as a "self" and, if so, what it is. (Schutte 2009, 33)

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of Schutte's message. As Latina feminism grows and expands, as more Latina voices are included in philosophy and other disciplines, we cannot afford to divide ourselves with such strict borders and in effect silence other Latina voices that are not like our own. We need to learn to handle and understand our differences, as Schutte's life work so movingly reminds us, as "sites of appreciation, desire, recognition, caring, and respect." This does not mean that there cannot be disagreement among us and that some views cannot be evaluated and critically assessed but that despite the possible untranslatability within our own Latina feminist positions we need to be respectful and careful and allow for possibilities of coalitions across our own differences. The construction of strict borders and the exclusion of the value of differing positions within Latina feminism, as Ofelia so insightfully warns, can be dangerous. Let us then critically engage with emergent and established Latina feminisms, being mindful of the different ways in which these feminisms may help us in the struggle that we all share of combating injustice, alienation, and oppression against those who live at the margins and whose voices have been silenced.

A Split Philosophical Subject

In addition to learning from Ofelia Schutte's intellectual generosity and Nietzschean understanding of the need for a plurality of perspectives, I have been deeply moved by her discussion of her own experience as a Latina academic philosopher. In her brilliant and well-known 1998 essay on "Cultural Alterity: Cross-Cultural Communication and Feminist Theory in North-South Contexts," not only does she provide an illuminating exploration, among other things, of the way in which cultural difference brings to light "the stranger within" as well as the incommensurable, untranslatable element in cross-cultural communication, but she also provides a deeply moving (at least it was so for me as I remember crying when I first read it) description of what she feels as a Latina academic. She explains in detail what it means to become visible within the dominant cultural view—having to demonstrate that I can be proficient in both the Latina and North American context, that I negotiate the Latina context in such a way that it is of benefit to the North American culture, that if necessary I can perform a "public erasure" of my Latina voice while in the dominant context. Doing well, successfully representing my culture in the dominant context, means transcending my own culture, mastering another language while acting like myself or informed by my Nicaraguan upbringing marks me an "other"—I am, then, a split subject.

As painful as it is to be a split subject, it is more painful to be such a split subject alone. Given my own circumstances, my pursuing a degree in philosophy without the aid of any faculty or students of color in environments in which there was no appreciation of cultural difference or alterity, Ofelia's description of her own experience touched me perhaps in a way that words cannot easily describe and provided, if I may say so, a "textual nurturing" that I deeply needed as I embarked on a difficult personal and intellectual journey in the world of academic philosophy. I cannot thank her enough for not only offering tremendous intellectual gifts, gifts of words about Nietzsche, Postcoloniality, Latina feminism, Latin American feminism, Globalization, French feminism, etc., but also for having the courage to put her own experience on the page and by so doing helping other Latinas that so badly needed to find her words so as to feel not utterly alone in a philosophical world that offered both remarkable intellectual gifts but also remarkably alienating experiences.

Finally, and at the risk of being considered overly sentimental, I do not want to forget to thank Ofelia for being the

generous person that she is. Without explaining the different specific circumstances that have prompted me to seek Ofelia's help and advice, I can say that there have been various times in which Ofelia's kind but firm words have helped me understand the kind of person and philosopher that I want to be. She has reminded me to work on issues that I care about, to not give in to professional pressures connected with the pursuit of power, to be myself. We have talked about earthquakes, exile, white women feminism, alienation, publications, searching for jobs, academic feminism—our dogs. A conversation I had with her over an experience we both had at a feminist conference inspired me to write an article about the way in which Latinas are treated within white feminism. These few but important conversations as well as Ofelia's way of being and of practicing philosophy continue to be an inspiration for me, and I am thankful for having the opportunity to be here celebrating Ofelia and her so many gifts of words and thought that she has so graciously offered to us. Gracias Ofelia.

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A Genealogy of Teaching and Research: Latin American and Feminist Philosophy

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To all who have made this event possible, thank you so much for your friendship and support. I am very moved to hear what my thoughts and actions have meant to you. I am especially glad that, together, we have contributed to the openness and inclusiveness of the profession of philosophy through the legitimation of Latin American philosophy, which affirms our Latina/o cultural heritage. In addition, particularly through our work in feminism as well as Latin American and Latina/o philosophy (often combined), we have supported multiple forms of inclusiveness in contemporary philosophy, reminding everyone how important it is to pay attention to women's voices and to the complexities of our individual and collective cultural backgrounds. I am also very grateful for the friendship and support of colleagues and students present here as well as of those communicating through the Web and other formats.¹

A word of warning: It is difficult for me to discuss the work in which I have engaged for over more than three decades without incorporating some aspects of my personal biography, if only because most of my motivation for doing philosophy has stemmed from my life experience.² By the time the words appear on the page, however, the personal has often been effaced to give way to an academic discussion. Questions about social justice or liberation theory that I have addressed have often emerged from issues raised by the Cuban revolution and its subsequent effects on my life. I have been motivated to write on cultural identity and difference having experienced marginalization or discrimination in terms of my cultural background as a Latina in the United States, or having seen

others suffer it. With regard to feminism, especially Latina and Latin American feminisms, I have written out of my life experience and often in solidarity with others in need of support. I conceive of my main publications as making space for other voices besides my own. *Estos fueron los tiempos en que me tocó vivir*. My writings and my sense of self evolved out of specific historical and cultural contexts, among them, the Cuban revolution, the U.S. civil rights movement, affirmative action and its implications in U.S. higher education, the international women's movement, the Nicaraguan revolution, the late twentieth-century "transitions to democracy" in Latin America, the post-Soviet neoliberal era, and the times of transnational migrations from global South to global North, of U.S. Latinas' and Latinos' struggle for justice, a time also of postcolonial feminisms. In the classroom, I have often made mention of personal experiences. For the benefit of the APA *Newsletter* readers, I mention these contexts because, in the end, a Latina philosopher is not just a mind (or brain) whose output may be found in collections of books or articles, but a living, embodied, and desiring human being who, as the existentialists say, is thrown into a world in a specific historical context and in concrete situations, and where she also has to make some tough choices and face (in the words of Sartre) an on-going "coefficient of adversity."³

Stages of Life's Work

Even though in my daily life I do not experience the sense of time in a particularly linear way—as I think I am more prone to defer to an aesthetic way of experience at least under non-stressful conditions—for the purposes of this narrative, and to pursue the dialogue with Jorge Gracia's kind observations about my work, I will refer to stages of personal development. Indeed, it would be hard to deny that, over a considerable length of time, my work and my life have developed in new and sometimes unanticipated directions. With this in mind I would say that my post-doctoral career spans approximately three stages, with some diversification within and across each stage. In the first years after my Ph.D. (1978-85), I published primarily on Nietzsche. But I also began work on Latin American and feminist philosophy at the pedagogical level, and I began attending conferences covering Latin American topics. As I will mention shortly, I taught my first undergraduate course in Latin American philosophy in 1980 and the first feminism course about a year or so later. My first authored book, *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks*, appeared in 1984. That year I was also awarded tenure and promotion to associate professor at the University of Florida's philosophy department in Gainesville. A year later I was awarded a Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship to Mexico City, to develop a book project on Latin American philosophy. This marks the beginning of the second stage since it eventually involved shifting my main area of research from Nietzsche studies to Latin American philosophy.

The middle stage may be described as lasting from 1985 to 1999. This period began in August 1985, with the start of my Fulbright fellowship to Mexico City. It ended in August 1999, when I left the University of Florida in Gainesville and moved to the University of South Florida in Tampa. During this period I researched and wrote *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (1993). I expanded my interests in Latin American feminisms and in European continental philosophy, in the latter case to encompass post-structuralist feminisms, along with certain other post-structuralist theorists such as Lyotard and Foucault. During this period I was also heavily engaged in professional service, especially in several APA committees and as vice-president and president of SILAT (Society for Iberian and Latin American Thought). I was a founding member of the APA Committee on Hispanics/Latinos/as in Philosophy,

and later chaired this committee, expanding our sponsored sessions to all three APA divisions. I traveled extensively to Latin America, returned to Cuba for the first time in 1986 after twenty-six years of absence, and engaged professionally with numerous colleagues in Cuba and Latin America. For the most part, this was an exciting period of interdisciplinary professional development, especially in Latin American studies and feminist theory. During the latter part of this period I began addressing some U.S. Latina issues. It was during this period that I wrote my often-cited articles "Negotiating Latina Identities" (2000) and "Cultural Alterity: Cross-Cultural Communication and Feminist Theory in North-South Contexts" (1998). Despite my promotion to full professor in 1994, however, my areas of specialization were significantly undervalued and marginalized from the mission of UF's philosophy department (especially its graduate program). After struggling to change this situation for several years without success, I finally opted to change jobs.

The third stage covers my employment at USF in Tampa from 1999 to the present (2012). I had two positions there. During the first five years I served as chair of Women's Studies, with an affiliate appointment in philosophy. For the remaining eight years I moved to philosophy full-time. Contrary to my previous appointment in philosophy at UF, the USF department gladly accepted all of my areas of specialization and fully integrated them into their Ph.D. program.

During the initial part of this period I produced several articles on feminism, especially on globalization issues (with a background in Latin America). After moving full-time to philosophy, I retook my earlier interests in Nietzsche and recent continental philosophy while also expanding my research in Latin American studies to postcolonial theory and feminism. During this period I interacted significantly with graduate students in philosophy, directed and/or co-directed dissertation research, and served as a member of numerous dissertation committees in philosophy. For the first time I experienced what it was like to reproduce one's knowledge as an area of specialization (AOS) to the next generation, something that doctoral faculty in areas considered "core" to philosophy generally take completely for granted. These were for the most part happy times when I could mentor Latina/o philosophy doctoral students in my own department, an exceptionally rewarding personal experience. Toward the end of this period I had a chance to co-edit the Blackwell *Companion to Latin American Philosophy* with Susana Nuccetelli and Otávio Bueno. My motivation for pursuing this large-scale editorial project was to leave a legacy in the profession to document the academic presence of our field—a field whose actual existence has so often been put in question, and on behalf of whose philosophical recognition I fought steadfastly for over thirty years. Here again, I was seeking to make available a variety of voices, not just my own, at the same time realizing that there is still much to be said and written beyond the pages of this volume.

My Books

With regard to my authored books, in each case I was motivated to say or do something that I felt was missing in the approaches taken toward the subject matter. Even though the two subjects were very different (Nietzsche and Latin American philosophy), each of these books broke a kind of silence in the way the scholarship about its respective field was produced. There was no model available for either book. In the case of Nietzsche, my challenge was to explore his philosophy of life affirmation from a feminist perspective, and one that called the model of power as domination into question. In *Beyond Nihilism* I also emphasized a Dionysian reading of Nietzsche, where the notion of power as creativity and overflow would link philosophy to art (broadly understood) and culture. Although at the time

I lacked the conceptual framework for developing a Latin American philosophical perspective, it is still possible to see that some of the themes I chose to explore—Nietzsche’s critique of Western metaphysics, his non-linear concept of time, the alliance between culture and life—would serve as transitional to my entry into Latin American philosophy. You can also see, in *Beyond Nihilism*, given that I parted with Nietzsche on issues of liberation ethics or social justice, how I would find a greater affinity on these topics with the Latin American authors I addressed in my next book.

Mariátegui became the pivotal figure that allowed me to reconvert my previously Eurocentric education to a broadly Latin American epistemic standpoint. Whereas it was not difficult to shift attention to Latin America from an ethical or political perspective (after all, José Martí, Leopoldo Zea, the early Enrique Dussel, and many others have made the ethical and political case in a variety of interesting ways), the epistemic turn from a European to a Latin American approach to knowledge was a huge challenge for me.⁴ I think this was especially difficult because for me, symbolically, the Name of the Father had been set in Europe (particularly in France, where all *real culture* came from, according to some in my family). In philosophy perhaps Nietzsche occupied the most condensed form of this unconscious symbolism for me. I could challenge Nietzsche from a feminist position, based on continental philosophy premises, but what about what today we call a post-colonial or global South position? It was at this juncture that I shifted perspectives when I decided to begin my next book with a discussion of Mariátegui. With the help of Mariátegui’s appropriation of some of Nietzsche’s ideas for his vision for an Indo-Hispanic Peruvian socialism, I was able to situate the epistemic point of departure for Latin American philosophy at a time *before* the Conquest—or, if you like, at the underside of the Euro-dominant narrative of the relationship between knowledge and culture. Mariátegui used all the tools of knowledge he found available, whether in Europe or in the Americas, but his point of inquiry was self-consciously rooted in his particular socio-historical condition.

When I attended graduate school in philosophy in the United States in the 1970s, my course of study bypassed any connection to my particular socio-historical condition, which was that of a Latina, and more specifically Cuban-American, immigrant to this country. I am fortunate to have had an outstanding education in European continental philosophy at Yale, where I received my Ph.D. in 1978. However, in that world of knowledge, Spanish was excluded as a legitimate language for an advanced degree in philosophy. I remember having requested to use Spanish for one of my language requirements only to be told that this would not be acceptable since there were only two philosophers known to have written in Spanish—Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset. This left a whole continent, Latin America, to be explored, but little did this matter to institutional philosophy. Like so many other Latin American philosophers, I had to learn the material on my own. In this regard, I was lucky to have been in the right place at the right time, since the University of Florida in Gainesville where I started teaching in 1978 has one of the best library collections in Latin American studies in the United States. Thanks to this and to a post-doctoral teaching fellowship I was awarded the following year, I organized and taught my first undergraduate course on Latin American philosophy in the spring of 1980.

In terms of my two authored books, then, the intellectual world that made possible the writing of my second book, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*, was non-existent (or at least not available to me) as a doctoral student in philosophy, which was the formative period

for my work on Nietzsche. I began to carve out my access to this new intellectual world and to construct a space for it at UF in Gainesville during the 1979-80 academic term. How this space for cultural inclusion in philosophy became fully operable throughout the 1980s and beyond is the narrative of my first encounters with Latin American philosophy and philosophers both in the U.S. and in Latin America.⁵ Those first encounters developed into intellectual and social networks and practices, culminating in our current Latina/o philosophical communities spanning several generations. In September 2013 it will be forty years since I started my Ph.D. studies. Today, doctoral programs can no longer pretend that our field of knowledge does not exist. Our challenge is different: we need faculty and administrators strongly to support faculty hiring and retention in this area, so that it is available to all students interested in it. We need to move the area from a marginal interest to a basic need. In this regard, philosophy lags behind most other fields in the humanities and social sciences, where the interest in Latin America is prominent.

Pedagogy

Although to the profession at large I am known primarily through my publications and conference papers, my first introduction to Latin American philosophy came through teaching. You might ask: How did it come to pass that I began to teach and do research in this field when the knowledge was generally invisible to philosophy departments on a national level?

In my first year of teaching, I applied for and received (for 1979-80) a Lilly Foundation post-doctoral teaching fellowship, whose special benefit was to provide release time for faculty to develop one or two new courses. In order to learn more about my own culture, which was not represented at all in the philosophy curriculum of the times, and considering the fact that I was teaching in the state of Florida, I decided to create a course on Latin American philosophy. I had no prior knowledge of the field and no models to copy. Using my release time, I went to the university library’s Latin American collection. That’s where I first found works by Leopoldo Zea. I put together a short course with readings primarily from Leopoldo Zea, Octavio Paz, Franz Fanon, and Paulo Freire. When I put flyers around campus announcing this course, I remember people jotting down disrespectful things, right on my flyer, next to “Latin American Philosophy” (like, *what’s that?*). Only a handful of students enrolled, but since the course was independently funded, I was able to teach it. The students were very supportive. Some wrote on the course evaluations that the course should be expanded and be offered permanently. That’s when I changed the title to “Latin American Social Thought,” a topic whose legitimacy nobody seemed to question (unlike Latin American *philosophy*). This course had a very successful trajectory for the remainder of my years at UF, where I worked until 1999, at which time I moved to the University of South Florida in Tampa.

I searched my old files to see if I could find any records of that first course. Here is part of the course description, intact. Reading it is like getting re-acquainted with myself at a younger place, going back thirty-two years in time:

The major themes covered in the course will be: the need for an authentic and original Latin American philosophy; the construction of a Latin American philosophy of history and culture; the role of education in the struggle for freedom; the question of racial identity, racial theory, and racial discrimination; and, finally, the experience of solitude, the need for solidarity, and the question of revolution. Existentialist and Marxist interpretations of these issues will be stressed. All issues will be approached first-hand from

a Latin American point of view. All readings will be of primary texts, available in English translation.⁵

In the first versions of my course I included Fanon as a Latin American because he came from the French Caribbean, and I was using the term “Latin America” literally. Fanon was also being read in Latin America in social and political thought, although I did not know this at the time, so the choice was not altogether unwarranted.

I have found four anonymous student evaluations in this thirty-two-year-old file folder. These were probably evaluations recommended or required by the Lilly fellowship, since they do not follow the standardized university format. Among their concerns were how this course compared with other humanities courses and whether it should be offered permanently on a regular basis. To the first question, “Do you consider that this course was a worthwhile experience for you?” one student replied (this is, remember around June, 1980): “Yes, very much so. The approach is *long overdue* [my emphasis]. Looking at the current problems and realities in Latin America from a generalized, philosophical level is something which has been neglected for too long.” Another said: “It changed my whole attitude towards ... any oppressed, impoverished nation.... It gave me a better understanding of life in relation to books.”

The following year (Spring 1981, for Latin American Social Thought), I delineated the major themes of the course as follows: (1) the problem of how to authentically define and record your own history; (2) the experience of solitude and the need for social and political solidarity; (3) the role of education in the struggle for freedom; (4) the impact of colonialism and racism; (5) the question of revolution.⁷ When I see the questions driving my search for knowledge at the time, I find it amazing that solitude, authenticity, and revolution were such strong questions for me at the time. These are three questions that, over the course of the years, I have moved beyond. I also find it significant that at the very beginning of my inquiry, I was posing the issues of colonialism and racism, in large part through the reading of Fanon. Those were progressive times in comparison with the very conservative waves that hit our program in the second half of the 1980s.⁸ With Gracia’s ground-breaking anthology *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* appearing in 1986, the legitimacy of teaching Latin American philosophy in the U.S. could no longer be put in question.

Latin American Feminisms

It’s also interesting that feminism was not part of these early classes. Apart from the difficulty of having to find works in English translation, the problem is that, despite the presence of many women philosophers in Latin America, the *tradition* of Latin American philosophy as such has been and still is a relatively male-dominated field, although with the younger generations this appears to be changing.

With the exception of meeting Graciela Hierro in 1983 at the World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal, my entry into Latin American feminisms took place in interdisciplinary contexts: the UF Center for Latin American Studies, professional congresses such as LASA, and my strong personal interest to research the situation of women in Cuba. It was perhaps this intense movement between people and places that enabled me to draw comparisons across the board, involving women in Cuba, in Latin America, and in the United States. Cuba was a special case that resembled neither of the other two because of its 1959 revolution and subsequent turn to a kind of Caribbean Marxism not found elsewhere in an institutionalized form. This triangular vision allowed me to theorize marginality and oppression all the better with respect to gender and its complex intersectional iterations.

An emotional question that many Cubans of my generation—who arrived in the U.S. as children or young teens—asked ourselves, when we reached our thirties and beyond was: What would my life had been like if my parents had stayed in Cuba? Where would I be right now in that society, for example, if I had been a university graduate, if I had studied the same or some other field? Or, by extension, what would my life have been like today (in the 1980s) if in 1960 my parents had emigrated to another Latin American country? What might have been my socio-cultural location in such a society? In this respect, I could put myself in the place of women in comparable professional roles (and notice that, to answer this question, I could not assume I was a man, or “anyone” in general, as philosophers often hypothesize). This type of location-specific “what if” question made me very attentive to the specific circumstances and challenges of women’s lives, taking into account class, race, and other factors. Already for epistemic purposes you see that to answer this type of question, which is at the core of our understanding of cultural identity, the question for me as a woman and as a feminist had to be posed in a gender-specific form. At the same time that I was searching for my own cultural identity as a Latina and Cuban American in the United States, I could also try to see how social and political contexts in Cuba and other Latin American countries enabled women to reach their liberatory aspirations, and to manage that ubiquitous “coefficient of adversity” we face in widespread masculine-dominant constructs of gender.

I was moved to connect with Latin American feminists because my social upbringing gendered me like many of them despite the fact that from the age of fourteen and a half I lived in the U.S. I found a striking resemblance in the social construction of our visible gender roles and social “manners” (or habitual ways of being-in-the-world), so much so that the first time I had these experiences when traveling to Latin America I felt a kind of cultural shock upon noticing the similarities. Yes, there were obvious differences in terms of my being Cuban, or Cuban American, but when it came to issues of gender and gender relations, it seemed that many of us were navigating the same or very similar waters. Sexism, alongside regulative ideals of gender normativity and masculine dominance, takes culturally specific forms. In this case, it seems that the effects of Spanish colonialism over our entire region of the world left their imprint in the deepest recesses of our collective and individual psyches. It was partly due to these experiences that I developed my critique of normative (hetero)sexuality. I found such normative gender constructs not only unhealthy and oppressive, but also instruments of widespread social manipulation, insofar as the social production of “woman” under such norms renders subjects replaceable by and interchangeable with one another. As we all know, what is so easily replaced has virtually no space from which to claim respect or recognition for her individual needs, whether as a human being or a producer of knowledge.

I speak here to Elizabeth Millán’s concerns, so well expressed, regarding the marginalizing of women’s issues within the Latin American philosophy tradition, which itself is marginalized in Western philosophy as a whole. This set of problems shows that Sor Juana is still our contemporary in her disputations about women’s rights to expert knowledge and against the practices of sexual prejudice and the double standards of moral comportment for men and women.

It was significant, as Elizabeth notes, that in 1988-89 a double issue of *The Philosophical Forum* was devoted to Latin American philosophy. It was thanks to the foresight of Marx Wartofsky, the general editor of the *Forum*, and of Jorge, who edited the special volume, that I was invited to contribute an article on feminism and philosophy in Latin America. The

inclusion of this topic—both because it dealt with women and because it was written from a feminist perspective in philosophy—defied all precedents at the time. In those days I found a kind of intellectual division of labor wherein men handled the topic of cultural identity while women specialized in gender identity, or in sex and gender issues, broadly conceived. It is as if men were expected to speak about the meaning of culture or even about who “we” are as a people in terms of class or ethno-race, whereas women could only speak about women’s own gender or sex. It wasn’t that women could not do feminism in philosophy. Difficult as this was until it became more acceptable in the 1990s, I agree with Elizabeth that the main obstacle is an androcentric conception of the canon. The traditional canon of Latin American philosophy, in the sense of exploring philosophy in its socio-cultural context in Latin America, has centered on the work of important male authors (Bolívar, Alberdi, Sarmiento, Martí, Vasconcelos, Ramos, Zea, and Dussel, to name a few) and the issues they take as priorities. Unless such priorities involve a critique of sexism and androcentrism in their very own constructs of knowledge, the reproduction of this blindness from one generation to the next is guaranteed.

Despite the advances I made in *Cultural Identity* as far as including the contributions of the women’s movement and feminist thought to the general tradition of cultural identity and social liberation in Latin American thought, it took a few more steps to develop the perspective I elaborated some years later in my article on “Cultural Alterity” (1998). I reached this more radical perspective because I wanted to defend an epistemic space for women experiencing a position of subalternity, while also incorporating my own experience as a Latina in an Anglocentric male-dominant intellectual environment. This more radical concept of cultural difference, with its components of subjective decentering and cross-cultural incommensurability, carried over into my later years in the profession. I am grateful that Andrea Pitts and Elena Ruíz-Aho, in their own ways, have found it helpful in developing their own philosophical projects. For the limitations of my concepts, of course, I speak for no one but myself.

Here I want to acknowledge that I am profoundly moved by Elena’s testimony to our pedagogical interaction. In some ways she who claims to have been voiceless has left me speechless. Elena’s philosophical interests in Nietzsche, continental philosophy, postcolonial and Latina feminisms, and Latin American philosophy place her very close to me in almost every single respect, except that I lack her wonderful poetic talent. She thanks me for helping her develop her own voice, or as she put it beautifully, for “disburdening her of the feeling of voicelessness.” Apart from sharing the knowledge that I have gained with students, or giving them references to pursue, in Elena’s case what I did was only a gentle intervention or direction here or there, a touch of emphasis, a word of caution, a steady sense of support. Mostly it was a kind of letting be—not necessarily that I am a Heideggerian. Rather, it is that Elena had the talent and the drive to make real that yearning or wisdom that had not yet found its way into philosophical (coming from a poetic) language. For this and other reasons not possible for us to dwell on here, but which are testimony to her great personal strength and talent, when Elena addresses the cultural politics of language, or the self’s imbeddedness in language, we are sure to find an open practice of philosophizing that is very much needed today. I celebrate Elena’s early achievements in philosophy as much as she celebrates my contributions to her education. Elena, thank you for being who you are.

In the same way I thank Andrea for being who she is, for not resting still in her pursuit of knowledge or in her persistence

to link this pursuit to an acknowledgment of her Latina roots, complex as they are. Here we see Andrea apply this talent to a reading of Sarmiento, but with a similar proficiency she can write about race or about “technologies of gender” (to use Teresa de Lauretis’s phrase) (1987). I am delighted that Andrea is pursuing her philosophical questions about assessing the narratives of social progress through multiple reading strategies. I can hardly wait to see how she pulls everything together in her dissertation at Vanderbilt.

Solitude, Companionship, Solidarity

Mariana Ortega’s comments have brought the topic of loneliness to the forefront, in the sense of the ethnic/gender isolation felt by a Latina philosophy graduate student, or even a faculty member, given that there are so few of us in philosophy and/or that our capacity to engage in philosophical discussion with like-minded others has often been limited. She speaks about how thrilled she was when she encountered my book on cultural identity in 1996. The sense of aloneness is a topic that haunted me, too, during the first part of my teaching and research career, and even before, when I had no word for it, during my years at Yale as a philosophy student. Following Nietzsche’s lead, I chose to call it “solitude.” One of the first papers I presented professionally, and the first one I published, was called “Solitude as Social Criticism: the Case of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra” (1980-81). Of course, Nietzsche had philosophized a great deal about solitude. He felt he needed it because it gave him distance from the norms of his contemporaries, which he further theorized as stifling his creativity, fueling resentment, and reducing humanity to “herd values.” In my paper on solitude I considered solitude, as theorized in Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, as an ambiguous and risky moral option. I argued that while solitude could provide a space for creativity and a critical distance from herd values, it also risked disconnecting a person from human interaction and community, which could lead to hurting the quality of our moral lives. My solution at the time was to reject herd society’s practices of assessing values through criteria of quantification. In that paper I argued that the problem of aloneness could be solved if only one found an authentic type of human community. In the course of time, I realized there were problems with the criterion of authenticity and that authenticity as such was not a transparent or even a politically viable concept. I retained the view, however, that while the experience of solitude could serve as a source of spiritual and moral strength it also led to the need for social solidarity, understood in a politically progressive sense which would include the ability to thrive in feminist or, at a minimum, in feminist-compatible environments.

I found colleagues and friends who shared my Latin American and/or feminist roots, but it took time. In the U.S. at the national level I became active in SILAT (Society for Iberian and Latin American Thought). Eventually I was also active in the APA Committee on Hispanics, as Jorge noted. Thanks to Jorge’s many conferences in Buffalo a group of us also had a chance to continue presenting our work and developing new ideas, as was the article “Negotiating Latina Identities,” which was written for one of his conferences. Since the mid-1980s I gradually began to develop friendships with a variety of philosophers in Latin America, while in Gainesville I joined interdisciplinary programs with a community of faculty specializing in Latin American studies and Women’s Studies.

At the end of the 1970s, when I started writing the manuscript that would become *Beyond Nihilism*, sometimes I would feel so alone as a young philosopher that I wished I had been born later, when there would be more women, especially more Latinas, in philosophy and in higher education. Despite the fact that I had much in common with my Anglophone colleagues in terms of common interests in the history or

philosophy or with regard to social/political issues, there was a gap in experience and sensitivity that was hard to describe or problematize, for it had no name. By the time I wrote and published *Cultural Identity*, however, there was already a small but visible presence of Latinos and Latinas in U.S. philosophy. Even though there was no model for my book, and thanks in part to the fact that Jorge had started the SUNY Series in Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture, I felt very strongly that once I broke through the impasse of doing Latin American philosophy in English, bringing sustained attention to questions that generated intense interest and debates through several decades of the twentieth century, the way would open for many others in the United States to write on their own perspectives and interests. For this reason I also feel a sense of affinity with younger generations as they explore new perspectives that speak to the challenges they face. Over the years, with diligence and persistence we keep growing and flourishing. I wish everyone here and all who read this a most successful journey ahead.

Endnotes

1. I wish to extend my thanks to all the individuals who made this event possible, especially to Elena Ruíz-Aho, Kevin Aho, and the Florida Gulf Coast University Department of Philosophy. I am very grateful to the students in the FGCU Philosophy Club who participated generously in the planning and hosting of the event, in particular Ellie Levy, María Barbero, Paul Smith, and Jonathan Wurtz, as well as to USF history professor Adriana Novoa and philosophy graduate students Jesús Ramírez and Christine Wieseler for joining us at the event. My heartfelt thanks go to Jorge Gracia, Elizabeth Millán, Mariana Ortega, and Andrea Pitts for their interesting papers and for traveling to Ft. Myers to share in the commemoration, especially Elizabeth who brought along her recently born son. I am also very thankful to Linda Alcoff, Otávio Bueno, Angelo Corlett, María Luisa Femenías, Eva Kittay, Eduardo Mendieta, Gregory Pappas, and Amy Oliver for their messages of friendship and appreciation. I thank the editors of the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues* for the invitation to publish the papers and to Elena Ruíz-Aho for guest editing the material and for her memorable contribution to the event.
2. See “Philosophy and Life ...” in Alcoff, 2003, and my interview with Oscar Martí in “Cuban, Hispanic, and Latina?” (2008).
3. See the section on “Freedom and Facticity” toward the end of *Being and Nothingness*, but in particular the example Sartre gives of slavery, p. 703.
4. Even Zea and Dussel (especially in his earlier works) relied on European philosophers to make their case (Hegel, Sartre, Levinas, Heidegger).
5. I met Zea and Dussel at the 1981 Interamerican Congress of Philosophy in Tallahassee, Florida, where they both gave presentations critical of Eurocentrism. Jorge Gracia and I probably met there too, although I remember vividly four years later how our paths crossed at the next Interamerican Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico. I met several more Latin Americans at the World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal in 1983, including Graciela Hierro. In the fall of 1983 I met Oscar Martí at the XI International LASA Congress in Mexico City. On the UNAM campus I met Horacio Cerutti Guldberg, who gave me a handful of reading suggestions (Zea, Salazar Bondy, Roig, his own book, and others). This was very helpful. During that same trip at Graciela Hierro’s invitation I met with some of her feminist colleagues. Of course, these networks of contacts increased over time, extending over more countries. With regard to feminism, the first meeting of feminist philosophers from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Argentina took place at UNAM in Mexico City in 1988, followed by another one in Buenos Aires in 1989. I guest edited a small cluster of papers from those meetings for *Hypatia* in 1994.
6. O. M. Schutte, PHI 3930, Latin American Philosophy, mimeo [Spring 1980].
7. Prof. Ofelia Schutte, PHI 4930, Spring 1981, mimeo.
8. In 1986 the UF Department of Philosophy was placed in receivership. Severe curricular restructuring followed, in which most courses in continental philosophy and in applied philosophy were eliminated.

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