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# **The Development of Latin American Philosophy**

Lorenzo Roberto Almada

**Occasional Paper No. 77**

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## Abstract

There are three phases to be considered when seeking to understand the development of a unique Latin American philosophy. These phases include: an oppositional perspective; a narrative space that is uniquely Latin American, and writing from the radical exteriority of Western European ideology. In each phase we find two separate methodological approaches: abstract epistemological, and concrete ontological. With each phase Latin American scholars have advanced to become leaders on the cutting edge of “global unification.” This essay considers each phase and methodology in seeking to understand Latin American philosophy moving forward toward international decolonization and pre-colonial rediscovery.

## About the Author

Lorenzo Roberto Almada received his Bachelor’s degree from California State University at Fullerton in philosophy before he went on to complete his Master’s degree at West Virginia University. He completed all of the requirements but the dissertation for the Ph.D. at U.C. Santa Cruz in the History of Consciousness program and subsequently left academia to pursue his passion in working with challenged communities. Upon his retirement he has undertaken the study of Latin American philosophy to further contribute to the academic community.

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## Introduction

Latin American thought is inseparable from Western philosophy by virtue of colonial history. As a result, it entails an interpretive reception of Western philosophy and ultimately its transformation and peculiar uses in the Latin American context. Furthermore, Latin American philosophy is influenced in important ways by Islamic, Jewish, and African traditions and thought. Also, in the last twenty years Latin America has seen the resurfacing of indigenous cultures. Indigenous thought, once thought decimated by colonization, has reappeared to enrich and contribute to a new horizon for Latin American social, political, economic, and existential consciousness (Vallega, 2014: 1).

In the initial historical evolution of Latin American scholarship, the first step that was undertaken consisted of an effort to identify and delineate the philosophical and epistemological context for Latin American scholarship to develop. Prior to the second half of the twentieth century the only efforts toward considering the notion of a unique Latin American philosophy were sporadic and disconnected. Our review of the development of Latin American philosophy and thought takes its point of demarcation from the second half of the twentieth century. In this context, it is appropriate that we begin with the classic debate and opposition between Salazar Bondy and Leopoldo Zea on the issue of whether or not there can be a truly unique Latin American philosophy.

The relationship between Latin American scholarship and the Western European modernist ideology of the North American social, political and economic apparatus and structures under which Latin Americans now live provides us with an initial questioning of the very identity of being that can rightly be attributed to Latin Americans. The debate between Augusto Salazar Bondy and Leopoldo Zea opens up two separate narrative lines of inquiry with their respective calls to action for Latin American scholars to pursue. To better understand these differing calls to action, we must begin with a consideration of each path; their differentiating philosophical and epistemological grounds, and the proposed identity of Latin American scholarship in contradistinction to existing North American structures which dominate the lives of Latin Americans.

The colonial treatment of Latin Americans under structures of domination can, philosophically and epistemologically, be considered aggressive acts of violence. In this context, it should be understood that these ideological modernist structures of domination have themselves provided distorted descriptions and representations of the indigenous and mestizo populations of the Americas. In fact, we would be better served to focus on the established colonial description of indigenous and mestizo people and their reified social and political reality through the use of specific methods for cataloging, analyzing and interpreting gathered data. Such abstract concepts now serve to maintain domination over the consciousness of Latin Americans.

However, the true culprit in such acts of violence and domination are the standards of Western European consciousness under the influence of modernist ideology. Here then is the basis for those who may desire to identify and help shape an authentic Latin American philosophy. In this context, we must begin with a point of demarcation that starts apart from Western European methodologies and consciousness in order to tell the true history and evolution of indigenous and mestizo peoples living in the Americas. Additionally, one may also

wish to consider the appropriateness of the label "Latin America" with specific regard to the stated referent and its' subject of investigation (Frege, 1948).

### **The Salazar Bondy—Leopoldo Zea Debate**

Salazar Bondy began his career with a specific vision of the relationship between the colonizer, in the form of the social, political and economic mechanisms of domination and oppression under which Latin Americans exist, and the colonized, in the form of the concrete social, political and economic circumstances of Latin Americans. Stated differently, it is not necessary for us to begin with an historical analysis of how Latin Americans came to be in their current social, political and economic predicament precisely because of how Bondy understands the cognitive apparatus of Latin Americans that has been generated under the control of the colonizer.

As a Peruvian philosopher, Bondy subscribes to a materialistic ontology that, first and foremost, emphasizes the importance of examining the concrete living conditions of Latin Americans in their social, political and economic reality. In this manner, it is possible for scholars to extrapolate from such concrete experiences to identify the manifest consciousness of the community. At the depth of Bondy's analysis can be gleaned a subtle, negative dialectical methodology that contrasts the yet to be identified consciousness of Latin Americans against the colonialized consciousness of Latin Americans that arose under conditions of domination and oppression.

Bondy believes that there can be no such thing as a Latin American philosophy until such time that we are able to successfully decolonialize Latin Americans in their way of thinking, in contradistinction to the consciousness of Latin Americans produced under the colonizer's mechanisms of control. In other words, Latin Americans living under the control of the colonizer have been taught to seek justification for their thoughts and actions from the legitimizing mechanisms of colonial institutions that govern over their social, political and economic existence. Thus, in Bondy's point of view, it is only after we have decolonialized the Latin American's way of thinking that it will be possible to produce a uniquely Latin American philosophy.

For Bondy, the yet to be identified consciousness of Latin Americans shall be revealed under the decolonialization process as a shift in focus from the colonizer's point of interests to a focus of interest on the will of Latin Americans. Although Latin Americans are currently forced to live under the colonizer's control, Bondy proposes a nationwide effort to re-educate Latin Americans by first working through the decolonialization process from the colonizer's mechanisms of domination while concomitantly developing a form of critical consciousness. Once this process is initiated, Latin American scholars can then begin to focus on the wants and desires of Latin Americans who are no longer under the control of the colonizer.

We see in Bondy a sound argument as to why there cannot be a true Latin American philosophy at this time. That is, stated in overly simplified terms, the colonizer lives in our minds. Until we are able to change our way of thinking to reflect our own ideas and beliefs, in contradistinction to those of the colonizer, we cannot have a Latin American philosophy. Contrary to Bondy's view, Leopoldo Zea firmly believes that there is such a thing as a Latin American philosophy.

To properly understand Zea's position, we must understand his use of the Hegelian Dialectic. Zea focuses his use of the dialectic on Hegel's assertion that history can only be

meaningful for a certain place at a certain time. Based on this assertion, Zea believes that we can identify and solve our own problems as opposed to having our needs identified and dealt with by the social, political, and economic mechanisms of colonial oppression and domination. In this context, we would be using our own mechanism of liberation functioning within a philosophy of liberation. In considering Zea's proposition, we see that his understanding of the events of the past are placed against a decolonialized understanding of the currently concrete circumstances of the colonizer's domination and oppression, which enables us to produce a vision of the future that is uniquely Latin American.

As far as Latin American identity is concerned, Zea believes that we also have the ability to recreate our own history. That is, as descendants of indigenous and mestizo ancestors we have collectively and concretely maintained our cultural beliefs and oral traditions. In this context, momentous historical events such as the conquest or our wars of independence remain fresh in our collective memories and can be rewritten from our own Latin American perspective based on the oral records of our own people.

Looking strictly from a teleological perspective, the debate between Bondy and Zea centers on whether one prefers to focus on extracting Western North American modernist ideology as a whole from our way of thinking, or embrace the notion that the instrumental use of the dialectic can be used to finally rid ourselves of the coloniality of the conqueror and begin to control our own beliefs and ideas in contradistinction to the colonizer.

No matter which position one decides to take, both of these philosophers have performed the service of introducing us to an oppositional stance with respect to the colonizer that would have us work to decolonialize ourselves and they have also served to open up a narrative space in which Latin American scholars can continue to make the necessary strides toward our ultimate liberation from colonial domination.

### **Decolonialization and the Philosophy of Liberation**

The colonizer is indebted to the colonized for the wealth and the labor power extracted from the colonies, at the least. Moreover, in Gayatri Spivak's words, the colonizer has performed an 'epistemic violation' of the colonized, insofar as all legitimizing concepts in the colony derive from the colonizer's mentality and interests (as cited in Mendieta, 2003: 158).

Latin American scholars, as the beneficiaries of Bondy's and Zea's philosophical insights, were now primed for engaging in a process of decolonialization and liberation for Latin Americans from the hegemonic domination of the Western European structural apparatus under which they now live. In the previous section we considered the opening of a narrative space for the creation of a decolonialization project and for undertaking the identification and epistemological structuring of Latin American philosophy. In this section we shall consider the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró and the Theology of Liberation, as well as the work of Enrique Dussel in the Philosophy of Liberation. In the perspectives of both of these philosophers the Latin American project of decolonialization becomes directly tied to social action.

## **Ignacio Martín-Baró and the Theology of Liberation**

As a theologian and psychologist, Martín-Baró held a deep passion for the spiritual, physical and mental wellbeing of all individuals, specifically those who have been subjected to colonized systems of government, including and especially with respect to their systems of intellectual development. Martín-Baró's view of these social mechanisms includes an understanding of how such mechanisms function to indoctrinate those living under its control. In most instances, such mechanisms lead to the acceptance and belief about one's own inauthentic identity in a manner completely susceptible to their own continued domination and oppression. In the philosophy of Karl Marx such mechanisms are designed to produce what Marx referred to as a "false consciousness" (Pines: 1993). As a trained psychologist, Martín-Baró believes that the field of psychology operates under such mechanisms to perpetuate a false or fictionalized image of being human. In this context, then, the objective of these mechanisms is to produce decontextualized individuals that are completely ahistorical and in this way serve to perpetuate oppression. In Martín-Baró's personal encounters with such social mechanisms and his own critical analysis of how they function, he finds three ideological components that serve to sustain them: 1) scientific mimicry; 2) inadequate epistemology; and 3) provincial dogmatism.

Most often, one lives in a culture of domination, whether it is among a conquered people outside of the motherland or within North American societies, in which a power structure is in control of social, political and economic spheres of influence that govern the daily lives of citizens along racial, ethnic and gender lines. In this context, psychological health and wellbeing is represented as an abstracted concept that is subject to the whims of society and the interplay of social, political and economic influences. In the psychology of liberation, according to Martín-Baró, the primary objectives of psychology should be directed toward the dismantling of colonial structures that dominate the social, political and economic spheres and govern the consciousness of Latin Americans, and facilitate the liberation of individuals and communities to achieve personal and collective freedom in the form of a critical consciousness (Freire, 1968).

In this context, Martín-Baró provides us with three programmatic objectives that serve to contextualize the psychologist's efforts at liberating individuals from the colonial domination and oppression of their authentic beings and their psychological health and wellbeing. Specifically, Martín-Baró believes that we must strive toward the following: 1) the recovery of our own historical meaning or memory—Baró believes that the Latin American's negative self-image is a result of internalizing the colonial structures of oppression rather than a more true and authentic self-image provided by their own true history; 2) the de-ideologizing of consciousness which he equates with the development of what Paulo Freire refers to as a form of "critical consciousness"; and 3) the utilization of the virtues of the people through the critical consciousness of the people; including use of the conventional instruments of social research and opinion polls against the dominant colonial structures.

Martín-Baró differs from other philosophers in that his efforts are entirely invested in social action and implementation. To this end, Martín-Baró has consistently included in his objectives a proposed course of action. It was because of the concrete application of the psychology of liberation that he and his entire family were murdered by representatives of the colonial power structure against whom he so valiantly fought. The sacrifice he made on behalf of all Latin Americans cost him his life and that of his wife and children. Martín-Baró gave his

life in the hope that all Latin Americans would be able to realize a better and more authentic sense of being that he believed all Latin Americans deserve.

### **Enrique Dussel and the Philosophy of Liberation**

The confrontational opposition to the conqueror that we found in the works of Bondy and Zea have provided us with a narrative space in which Latin American scholars were able to begin making a positive impact on the lives of all Latin Americans. However, to be truly successful, such oppositional and de-structive (Dussel: 1996) processes must also be able to give voice to and represent the Latin American experience through its own language, identity and worldview. The key to understanding the work of Enrique Dussel is to understand his interpretation of Heidegger's notion of "being-in-the-world." Dussel believes that by understanding the colonized in terms of their own sense of being in the world we are able to facilitate an appropriate expression of our own socially marginalized or excluded status in society in contradistinction to the descriptions produced by the colonizer.

Dussel seeks to reveal for us the mechanisms of oppression and domination exerted over the exploited and colonized people of the Americas but not in the sense that we can point to them abstractly and say, "there they are." Rather, Dussel wants to show us how these mechanisms work and how they themselves can be de-structured. Additionally, Dussel further contends that this approach to understanding the plight of colonized people is not only applicable to the indigenous and mestizo people of the Americas, but it would also be applicable for people worldwide living under conditions of oppression and domination at the hands of a colonizer.

Dussel is able to create a distinction between the colonizer and the colonized by considering the question, "What does the history of Western ontology have to do with the reality of indigenous and mestizo people living in the Americas?" In other words, if we were to distinguish between the Western ontology of the colonizer and the sense of being in the world for the indigenous and mestizo people inhabiting the Americas, how would Western ontology be truly able to explain the sense of being for the colonized people of the Americas? In this question, what Dussel seeks to bring to our attention is that the ontology and view of the colonizer is better suited to reveal how Western ideology sees Latin Americans as being in the world, not how Latin Americans see themselves as being in the world. It is in this way that we begin to see a wedge of demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized in how they view "being in the world."

In this context there is another question to be asked. Specifically, given the fact that Western ontology is taken to be a totality in and of itself, in what ways are the colonized to understand their relationship to the colonizer as being from outside of the colonizer's system of totality, if not by finding themselves in a position of radical exteriority? That is, for the people of the Americas to view themselves outside of the system of totality constituted by the colonizer, they would need to be on the exterior of the system and this, in turn, would constitute a radical relationship that can begin to question the very systems of oppression and domination under which they are held.

The de-structuring process of dismantling the mechanisms of oppression and domination can only be realized by simultaneously developing what will become an ontological foundation for the indigenous and mestizo people living in the Americas. To accomplish such a task, it is necessary to transition from an existing ontology or system of being to a sense of

being that is constituted as a separately envisioned system of liberation. It is here that Dussel turns his attention to G.W.F. Hegel and the notion of the dialectic. To be sure, Hegel's dialectic is inherently oppositional in its design and for Dussel this was specifically suitable to the task of a Philosophy of Liberation. Dussel believes that when we equate Heidegger's notion of being- in-the-world to the actual concrete experiences of indigenous and mestizo people living in the Americas, we can then begin to transition into a uniquely Latin American social reality through a dialectical process of reconstituting the historical memory of the indigenous and mestizo people living in Latin America.

It is important to understand that in this context, the task of the philosophy of liberation is not to reform the existing systems; instead, it is a process of overcoming the existing systems of oppression and domination as a negative dialectic transitioning into a radical exteriority. As Dussel argues,

Our de-structive task, to annihilate forgetting in order to have the sense of being reappear, must know to choose some fundamental and decisive epochs and moments in history and within cultural horizons that may not be excluded in order for us to arrive at the comprehension of ourselves. This understanding is at the bottom or is the foundation for all authentic thinking; on it does not only depend my personal project, but equally the collective destiny of 'my' people ('my' us) ['mi' pueblo ('mi' nosotros)] [...] As the Latin Americans that we are, we must know to choose the history of the peoples that builds us (the cultures) and in them [the peoples] the essential historical moments" (as cited in Vallega, 2014: 56).

For Dussel, then, this is the task of a Philosophy of Liberation. In making such a declaration, Dussel does not see himself as engaging in the required praxis of a philosophy of liberation. Rather, he is calling for the creation of a philosophy of liberation. Dussel is no more able than Zea to escape from the iron cage of science in the very act of deconstruction or dismantling of the existing mechanisms of oppression and domination. The critiques that have been offered of Dussel's work generally center on the issue of not having engaged in the praxis of liberation. Another way to view the contributions of Dussel's work can be expressed analogously by reference to the act of "de-centering" (Derrida, 1976).

Derrida appears to believe in what he calls the act of de-centering a text that is accomplished by analyzing the trace elements of a text within the structure of the text itself and thereby exposing the center or first principle that stands outside of the system of signification within the text and yet informs its meaning. By following my analogy, Dussel has in effect analyzed the trace elements of the mechanisms of oppression and domination and succeeded in pointing to the first principles of the system of domination that exist outside of the system itself, and has thereby provided a basis for the creation of a Philosophy of Liberation outside of the totality of the system of domination in its radical exteriority. It remains for Latin American Philosophers to engage in the praxis of liberation through the radical exteriority provided in the work of Dussel.

While the decolonialization and liberation efforts of Ignacio Martín-Baró and Enrique Dussel serve to provide us with unique methodological and theoretical frameworks with which to guide the praxis of Latin American psychologists and social liberation advocates, given the emphasis of Martín-Baró on psychological methodologies in conjunction with Dussel's eclectic philosophical approach to liberation, the question of the existence of a uniquely Latin American

philosophy remains unresolved. In the work of Martín-Baró we are given the tools necessary to proceed along the lines he has delineated for our continuing effort to achieve the decolonialization of Latin American consciousness. Concomitantly, we have also witnessed the colonial system of domination effectively dismantled by Dussel. In doing so, a narrative space is made available in the radical exteriority of the system that would allow Latin American scholars to identify or create a Latin American philosophy. It is in this context that the notions of "radical exteriority" and "critical ontology" serve to return our considerations to develop our own future- oriented and constructive ideology that can produce a truly unique Latin American philosophy.

### **On The Radical Exterior**

Philosophy today is changing; the field of philosophy is undergoing a new dawn with the formation and inclusion of world philosophies that bear origins, experience, overlappings, encroachments, and transformations well beyond the modern North American and European traditions (Vallega, 2014: 1).

Now that Latin American scholars are able to work on the exterior of Western mechanisms of colonial control, it is necessary for the Latin American journey to begin with the identification of an appropriate starting point. The work of Martín-Baró is certainly being implemented in many parts of Latin America and around the world wherever members of colonized societies are beginning to undertake decolonialization strategies of their own. In consideration of the contributions of Enrique Dussel, Latin American historians are also beginning to capture the voice of our indigenous and mestizo ancestors in our reconstruction efforts to explain our encounters with the colonizers from our own perspective. However, turning our focus toward the future of Latin America, the pursuit of an authentic voice with which to speak to the ideas and beliefs of Latin Americans is nothing short of a Herculean challenge. A review of the accomplishments of Latin American scholars reveals four major focal points that can serve to inform a basis for any future oriented efforts.

1. We learned that our relationship to our colonizers and our colonial history must be oppositional. That is, we do not want to project the future of Latin Americans with a conceptual coloniality underlying our efforts. However, the past existence of our coloniality can still be considered an essential part of the colonial difference necessary to invoke decolonialization (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). It is not entirely unreasonable that our future-looking Latin American philosophy include the ability to take a backward look at our historical memory in its diversity of conceptualizations (Bakhtin, 1982), its erasure and its reconstruction. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to distinguish Latin Americans from their colonizers.

2. Once our "otherness" is elaborated upon and delineated, we would still require a mechanism of our own with which to extricate the colonizer and reconstruct our own identity.

3. It would then be necessary to reconstruct our own identity, our historical memory, our self- dignity and a voice with which to express the ideas and beliefs of Latin Americans.

4. We will also need to make sense of our own ontology such that it is no longer necessary to speak of ourselves in terms of a radical exteriority. In this, then, we will find our own Latin American identity and gain the voice with which to give expression to our own Latin American philosophy.

In our first focal point we begin by coming to grips with our own Latin American identity. This notion was clearly championed in the works of Bondy and Zea. Through their visions we were able to oppose the identity by which we have been previously recognized around the world, an identity that was constructed by the colonizer's own culture industry (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1916). The most profound significance of these Latin American philosophers was demonstrated by the fact that they both provided alternative ways by which to oppose the colonial conquest of the Americas. In Salazar Bondy we found a clear explication of the fact that the colonizer must be extricated from our way of thinking and legitimize our own ideas and beliefs. To this end we have also been able to find, in the work of Leopoldo Zea, the process by which we can begin to reconstruct our own identity by restoring our historical memory and using our colonial difference to take corrective actions in our current state of affairs. By understanding the contributions of these Latin American philosophers as a first step in the development of our own Latin American philosophy, Latin American scholars were able to propose refinements and advancements in our collective efforts.

Our second focal point is based in our efforts at positioning ourselves for identifying and developing a uniquely Latin American philosophy. In this context, we have been provided with the tools that are necessary for our quest for liberation from colonial control and domination. While Bondy initiated the question of moving away from our colonizer's control and domination through decolonialization, the work of Martín-Baró in the Psychology of Liberation provides specific courses of action for the process of decolonializing Latin American consciousness. Further, in the work of Enrique Dussel and his Philosophy of Liberation project, we are provided with a mechanism by which Latin American scholars have been able to undertake the production of an authentic Latin American voice for our decolonializing efforts by restoring our own historical memory and identity. As Barratt argues, "Central to Martín-Baró's visionary commitments is not only Aristotle's insight that the political is personal and the personal is inherently politicized, but also that psychology has a potentially crucial role either in endorsing oppression or in empowering the processes of liberation" (Barratt, 2014, pg. 122).

As a trained psychologist, Martín-Baró turned the concerns and aspirations of Salazar Bondy into actionable mandates. The focal point of Martín-Baró's concern centered on his understanding of psychology and his grasp of the social, political and economic mechanisms of domination and oppression operating in the colonial institutions under which Latin Americans live. If we stop to fully consider the focus of Martín-Baró's efforts, it is no wonder that Bondy had to conclude that there cannot be a Latin American philosophy until such time as we can all become decolonialized. That is, imagine what he must have pictured in his own mind regarding someone that is not fully decolonialized wanting to write Latin American philosophy. Such an attempt would be an affront to Latin American society. It was, therefore, imperative for Martín-Baró to devise a framework under which Latin American psychologists and educators could begin the task of working toward decolonialization.

Let us shift our considerations from the Psychology of Liberation and Martín-Baró to that of the Philosophy of Liberation and the work of Enrique Dussel, who states:

Liberation Philosophy moves in the dialectic or the "passage" that departs from a given or established system ... [and] enters into the depth of a future system of liberation. The dialectical passage moves between an order and another, and all

the problematic of the rupture within the old (1) order as a system of domination, by the praxis of liberation itself; (2) and of the constructive moment of the new order; (3) Old order (1) → Passage of liberation (2) → New order (3) (Dussel, 1996: 5).

In our third focal point we find that Enrique Dussel had a very different approach in mind as he sought to further the concerns expressed by Leopoldo Zea. That is, Dussel felt compelled to transform the Latin American's desire to recover our historical memory and reconstruct our Latin American identity with an actionable framework that would not only assist in our look backwards through our own history. Dussel's methodology also serves to help identify the proper course of action for our future, based on the evidence of the past, as understood in the present. Each of our two philosophers, in their own way of viewing the Latin American reality, felt compelled to address what they believed would most appropriately function properly in the effort to decolonialize Latin Americans. Dussel's work not only provided a framework for looking back into the colonial past, he also ensured that the framework he provided served to identify Latin America's future from the radical exteriority of Western European systems of colonial domination.

Moreover, Dussel went a step further by tracing the elements of domination and oppression operating beneath the surface of our social, political and economic institutions used to maintain control over Latin Americans. Specifically, he was able to identify these trace elements so as to reveal their first principles (Derrida, 1976) that stand outside of the system of signification and inform the structure of these mechanisms of oppression. The space that Dussel was able to reveal regarding the first principles of the mechanisms of oppression also serve to identify a space existing outside of the systems of oppression in our social, political and economic institutions, and thereby provide Latin American scholars with a narrative space in the radical exteriority of the colonizer's entire system of coloniality and control.

Our fourth and current focal point is centered in our efforts to identify and engage in the creation of a uniquely Latin American philosophy. In this context, there are two aspects that need to be considered as we move forward. The first aspect for us to consider involves an imaginary line of succession from Zea to Dussel and then to Mignolo. The second aspect follows an imaginary line of succession from Bondy to Martín-Baró and then to Castro-Gomez.

In our first aspect we can say that the concern has been expressed with a focus on epistemology. This should not be taken to mean that the frameworks that were provided failed to be grounded in empirical facts. In this aspect we are provided with a radical exteriority with which to better understand the oppositional stance of Latin Americans with respect to colonial powers. In Zea we engage in the restoration of our historical memory and identity, while in Dussel we not only engage in this restoration, we are also provided with an epistemological method to de-struct the colonizer's mechanisms of oppression while liberating Latin Americans from their colonialized thinking, and with a narrative space outside of the colonizing mechanisms of oppression in the radical exteriority of the system of control itself.

Today we are concerned with two different points of interest and inquiry. The first point of interest seeks to arrive at an analytical conclusion regarding our epistemological ability to write from the radical exteriority of a system of colonial domination. Stated differently, we do not begin our approach to writing Latin American philosophy from the exterior of the colonial system without a foundation. Instead, we must first begin our analysis of what it means to be at the exterior by examining our perceptual understanding of the present (Foucault, 1982) to

ensure that our existence, as we understand it, is not emanating from within the mechanisms of domination and control. The advantage of proceeding in this manner is that along the way we will learn of the inner workings of the system of domination and control. Once this is accomplished we can proceed to de-struct these mechanisms and gain our own voice with which to create our own Latin American philosophy.

To this end, Castro-Gómez suggests we make use of Foucault's ideas,

In this sense, then, what Foucault seeks is to advance toward a "history of the present" that no longer departs from a normative model of "humanity" - that is, from a particular (modern) idea of what it means to be "human," abstracted from the historical contingencies that gave rise to it. It is a matter, then, of examining the ontological status of the present, foregrounding precisely the historical contingencies and the strategies of power that configured its humanistic claims to universal validity. Foucault recognizes here a new form of approaching philosophically the problem of modernity in which, before discovering the "truth" of its inherent promises (freedom, equality, fraternity), what is sought is to reveal the technologies of domination that aided in its fabrication, as well as the different forms in which such a truth constitutes our contemporary subjectivity (Castro-Gómez, 2014: 70).

To this point in our consideration of the colonized, we are able to reveal the manner by which Latin Americans have taken an oppositional stance toward the colonizer through a radical exteriority. From our understanding of the mechanisms of domination and oppression and our own ontology of the present, we are better able to see the mechanisms of domination and oppression in their procedural functionality. However, while we do not question Foucault's methodology for its stated purpose, we need not refocus our point of view to explicating the mechanisms of domination and control to better understand how they have functioned to produce us. His project, however, does seem well suited for reconsidering the Western European's colonial line of reasoning.

We can admit that knowledge of the mechanisms of domination are useful in the psychological decolonization process. As Paulo Freire once said, only the oppressed can liberate the oppressor (Freire, 1970). However, is this the mission of Latin American scholars? If we give consideration to Foucault's approach, what will we gain for ourselves as Latin Americans? In following Foucault's approach as suggested above by Castro-Gómez, we would most certainly find an oppositional positioning of Latin Americans in relation to the colonial mechanisms of domination and control. Furthermore, we would also gain our own process with which to reject the colonizer's mechanisms of domination and control from an ontological perspective, while reconstructing our own historical memory and identity.

However, in giving further consideration to Foucault's approach it occurs to me that perhaps we should be more concerned with Latin America rather than with refocusing our attention on the mechanisms of domination and control. That is, we already have an oppositional stance toward the colonizer and we are able to de-struct their colonial mechanisms of domination and control as well as reconstruct our historical memory and identity. It would seem to me that discovering and explicating the colonizer's mechanisms of domination and control, the "dispositifs", are more suited to the mission of contemporary anti-modernists efforts. Choosing Foucault's exteriority over that of Dussel is completely unnecessary,

especially in light of Dussel's use of Heidegger's notion of being in the world.

In our second aspect of consideration, running from Zea to Dussell and now to Mignolo, we find that Heidegger's notion of being in the world is more metaphysical in scope and nature. Here the referent of concern focuses on our own sense of identity in our radical exteriority. In this context, let us consider Walter Mignolo's notion of epistemic disobedience.

Epistemic disobedience takes us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects *experienced* by all the inhabitants of the globe that were at the receiving end of global designs to colonize the economy (appropriation of land and natural resources), authority (management by the Monarch, the State, or the Church), and police and military enforcement (coloniality of power), to colonize knowledges (languages, categories of thoughts, belief systems, etc.) and beings (subjectivity). "Delinking" is then necessary because there is no way out of the coloniality of power within Western (Greek and Latin) categories of thought. Consequently, de-linking implies epistemic disobedience rather than the constant search for "newness" [...] Epistemic disobedience takes us to a different place, to a different "beginning" [...], to spatial sites of struggles and building rather than to a new temporality within the same space (Mignolo, 2011: 7-8).

It is clear that Mignolo takes as his focal point the Latin American's own sense of being in the world.

In this context, Mignolo makes the de-structive process clear enough for us to understand. The task of Latin American philosophy is to visualize our own sense of being in the world by engaging in the process of "Delinking." Here the process centers on our own colonial difference from that of the colonizer. The notion of our colonial difference is revealed in our engagement of epistemological disobedience. In other words, instead of engaging in a process of dismantling the mechanisms of domination and control to reveal how we came to be in our current predicament, we engage in a process of delinking from such mechanisms that focuses on ourselves and our own sense of being in the world. In this way we are able to decolonialize ourselves while simultaneously dismantling the mechanisms of oppression.

The Latin American's sense of being in the world focuses our consideration on the concrete everyday experiences of being in the world and in our own communities. In this context, Latin American scholars would no longer need to seek abstract epistemologies, such as Zea's approach of examining our own historical evolution from our own perspective or Dussel's de-structuring of the mechanisms of domination and control, as part of the Latin American's recuperating of their own historical memory or identity. Instead, everything follows from our understanding of the present in our radical exteriority. That is, our radical exteriority inherently places us in an oppositional position with respect to the conqueror and his mechanisms of oppression while critically assessing our own sense of being in the world. (See Appendix – Graphic 1).

The significance of our cumulative considerations to this point is that the amount of importance that is given to resolving issues of Western rationality is amazing. Our indigenous and mestizo ancestors possessed what Octavio Paz has described as a form of poetic consciousness, a consciousness that emanates from the spirit within (Paz, 1975). Such a worldview is said to be our rightful heritage, and some may say that it has been imprinted

in our blood. If we suspend our colonialized understanding of rationality, that is, if we begin from the radical exteriority of Western epistemology, we could say things that do not concern themselves with Western intellectual rigor. For example, it has been said by someone somewhere that in the evolution of the colonizer's intellectual maturation, it was necessary to go through a stage of development that focused on what they called the "social contract." Are we, as Latin American descendants of our indigenous and mestizo heritage, now in a position to reclaim our own state of nature? Could we not simply say that the colonizer has breached their social contract with us as Latin Americans and be done with it? Could we even claim ownership of every existing resource within our lands as our own? Who says we need to reveal to our own sense of being in the world, the implications of posturing ourselves as Latin Americans, in this manner? Yes, this is simply a make believe scenario that I am not advocating, but it does give pause for considering options the colonized has over the colonizer in today's globalization efforts. (See Appendix – Graphic 2).

We need to understand what Latin American scholars have been trying to accomplish. Western European consciousness contains the modernist ideological mechanisms of a self-perpetuating apparatus that leads to global expansion, colonial conquest and the domination of others that are not of Western European descent. The ideology, which is inherent in all social, political, economic and cultural institutions, which work in unison to control the ideas and behavior of all members that live under its system, can itself only be manipulated by sheer wealth. Western European descendants are given favored status based on the ideological operations of the mechanisms themselves. Concomitantly, women and people of color are institutionally treated as second-class citizens through the ideological operations of the mechanisms themselves. In other words, for example, anything stated by any political line of reasoning at any time will ultimately have no real impact on the institutions of domination and oppression that control the lives of its citizens. That is, in the end, the colonizer's institutions will ensure and maintain control over the domination and oppression of Latin Americans.

However, Latin Americans have arisen from the slumber of the very history that has been written under the accepted structure of modernist ideology. As Latin Americans, we have come to realize that the status quo's history of our people and our land has been designed to ahistoricize our own consciousness, making us forget our own true history, our own identities and our own beliefs. If Latin Americans are to be their own people, on their own land, they must find a way to successfully oppose the colonizer's mechanisms of domination and oppression, and we must learn to speak with our own interests and identities in mind. This is in fact what our Latin American scholars have been trying to accomplish. In our current state of philosophical efforts we can say that Latin American philosophers have indeed been able to realize their collective objective. The path beyond our current understanding is to refocus our efforts into developing a positive philosophy based on the needs of Latin Americans.

### **Global Expansion and Latin America**

With his emphasis on the mechanisms of internal and transnational colonization, Habermas points to a problem that has recently been approached, from other perspectives, by theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak: colonialism is not something that affects only certain countries, social groups or individuals of the "Third World", but a shared global experience, which concerns both the old colonizers and the old (or new) colonized. The territorial and

nationalist colonialism of modernity has resulted in a postmodern, global and deterritorialized colonialism (Castro-Gomez, 1998: 157-58).<sup>1</sup>

The modern era takes as its starting point the beginning of the seventeenth century with the publication of *Novum Organum* in 1620 by Sir Francis Bacon. This text receives credit for being the first publication to explicitly lay out the fundamental tenets of scientific methodology. Subsequently, this methodology has served as the basis for the modernist ideology that has dominated Western European consciousness ever since. Prior to its publication, the notion of truth was regionally determined by kings, religions, or the use of force. This produced a lack of consistency that turned truth into a relativistic conglomeration of uncertainty. We should bear in mind that these observations were evident throughout Western European societies. Alternatively, scientific methodology provided a consistent basis for truth that could be verified by empirical investigation. This major paradigm shift took hold throughout Western European societies and became the standard basis for what can be regarded as absolute truth and remained so until the first half of the twentieth century.

The character of truth was once again transformed, however, during the first half of the twentieth century. This time the major paradigm shift focused on the absolute characteristic of truth that was believed to be inherent in the notion of scientific methodology. During this period the advent of Quantum Mechanics was developed and provided the scientific community with the ability to study the behavior of wave particles at a subatomic level. It was shortly thereafter that the German physicist Werner Heisenberg introduced what is now called the Heisenberg Principle of Uncertainty. What Heisenberg discovered was that one cannot determine the location and velocity of subatomic particles simultaneously because of being in a constant state of motion. Stated simply, this discovery meant that scientists were no longer able to pinpoint what we consider to be reality.

The Principle of Uncertainty most drastically impacted the Logical Atomists whose objectives were first stated in the text, *Principia Mathematica*, by Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The objective of the logical atomists was to produce what could be considered as a "picture perfect" language based on science. The prized pupil of the logical atomists was Ludwig Wittgenstein who, with his publication of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in 1922, had finally produced a scientific language that fulfilled the objectives of logical atomists.

It was during this very same period that the German physicist Werner Heisenberg was developing the principle of uncertainty. It was in this way that the basis for scientific truth lost its foothold on its inherent notion of scientific certainty. The absolute truth or Certainty Principle that served as the basis for scientific investigation was now shown to be invalid. It was, therefore, necessary to develop a new foundation for scientific truth. The philosopher Karl Popper was quick to provide a relativistic notion of truth termed the "Principle of Falsifiability" that basically holds that the products of scientific investigation are to be taken as true until such time that they can be disproved by further scientific investigation. This notion of truth still serves as our basis for scientific investigation.

The next major paradigm shift in Western European ideology is unfolding in the early part of the twenty-first century. However, this paradigm shift can no longer be considered North American, Western European, or Continental in scope or reach. Instead, we now exist in a time of transition from "global expansion" to "global unification," depending on one's philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Lorenzo Almada.

orientation. By way of over-simplification, the difference between global expansion and global unification is inherently identical to that of the colonizer and the colonized. Global expansion refers to the expansion of the colonialist notion of capitalism and its ever-expanding desire to conquer and dominate peoples across the world. Alternatively, global unification is a phenomenon that is simultaneously being realized by colonized groups around the world and their mutual efforts to decolonize their way of thinking to recover their own beliefs and ideology regarding being in the world. In this context, our global paradigm shift will determine the very future of the world and the natural state of humanity.

When we view our shared planetary home in terms of an economic world system (Wallerstein, 1974) we come to better understand the manner by which such a modernist and capitalist system has been able to expand its power and control over ever larger portions of the globe. However, in terms of the lives of the inhabitants of these colonized territories, the concept of transmodernity (Mignolo, 2011b) helps us to better understand how the transformation of Wallerstein's world systems could come to include the simultaneous expansion and control of human consciousness based on a Christianized view of an ideal civilized world. In this way the Western European modernist ideology maintains its control over the civilizing process as based on its own self-authorizing ideological beliefs.

When viewed in this manner, we can start to better understand the true significance of colonial expansion by European countries across the globe. To be sure, this global process or infestation into other inhabited parts of the world is so much more than mere colonialist capitalist expansion. The entrenchment of colonialist ideology presents us with a self-contained, self-authorizing and self-reinforcing system of power and control. In this context, the axes of social stratification can be seen as being structured along the lines of race, gender and cultural difference. What is worse, such a design of the inferiorization of others was consistently reinforced and propagated by the institutions of colonized territories. This, in turn, has produced a colonialist mindset in the consciousness of the people inhabiting these territories. Therefore, the threat to our future as human beings can now be understood as expansion and, more importantly, as a dynamic throughout the world that continues the implementation of its own self-serving legitimacy and global hegemony (Quijano, 2002).

Latin American philosophy can be better understood through the ways by which Latin American scholars have de-structured (Dussel, 1996) this process of attempted hegemonic control over humanity's future. There are three revealing perspectives expressed in the works of Latin American philosophers that we must consider in order to understand the timely oppositional contributions they have made to the attempted domination of our world order. By way of a critical deconstruction of global expansion, we need to examine the colonialization process and how it serves to deterritorialize and negate the concept of space in establishing its dominance over the consciousness of colonized peoples (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Such a process of dominance over the consciousness of colonized people also carries with it the colonialization of the notion of time (Quijano, 2000), and it can be argued that the notions of space and time converge to reveal an axis of power in the radical exteriority of the modernist institutions of colonial domination (Mignolo, 2007).

### **The Deterritorialization and Colonialization of Space and Time**

‘Science’ (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just ‘cultural’ phenomena in which people find their ‘identity’; they are

also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what human beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being [colonialidad del ser], (As quoted in Maldonado-Torres, 2007: 242).

If we consider how the development of philosophy has evolved as a discipline of study in Western European scholarship, what we would find are the self-contained developments of ideas made in the process of constructing philosophical systems of ideology that reflect Western European consciousness. To a certain extent, this would appear to be as it should but only in relation to modernist ideology as the beliefs and interests of the dominant socio-political power structure of the existing status quo. Stated differently, from the perspective of the citizenry, such self-contained systems of thought could never be said to authentically represent the beliefs and interests of all citizens as, for example, in the case of colonized territories. In this context, if we further consider the implications of such self-serving closed belief systems, we would be better served if we could identify a line of demarcation to distinguish between those for whom the closed systems are intended to work and those for whom they are not.

The line of demarcation that we seek has already been provided in Latin American philosophy in the works of Enrique Dussel. Specifically, we need only consider such self-serving closed systems from their radical exteriority. Once again, in the deconstructionist observations of Jacques Derrida, we need only trace the elements of such structured and closed systems in order to reveal the first principles standing outside of the closed system while yet informing its structure. It is in this sense, and in the analysis of the relation between the colonizers and the people they have colonized, that we can most easily understand how the deterritorialization of the colonizer's ideology serves their own self-interests in the furtherance of their domination and control over the lives of the people they have colonized.

That is, what can we consider the true significance of the deterritorialization of Western European ideology to be and how can it be said to impact the people of colonized territories? When we examine a Western European philosophy such as capitalism, there is an inherent assumption regarding the alleged neutrality of the philosopher and philosophical reasoning that it entails (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). This, however, as Maldonado-Torres has shown, is an erroneous assumption. Consider, for example, what Karl Marx may have had in mind when he was thinking about the means of production, the proletariat and the economic structure of capitalism in the United States. Would it be fair to say that the structure of a capitalist society in a colonized territory would function identically with respect to the means of production, the proletariat and a colonized labor force? By eliminating the territoriality of systems of Western European philosophical thought, the colonizer is able to maintain a cloak of invisibility over notions of economic equality and justice. Furthermore, under the conditions of ideological invisibility that accompany the deterritoriality of colonized ideology, the idea of being able to produce viable theories of social reform to equally serve the needs of people living in colonized territories is virtually impossible. In this context, well-intended social scientists would be unable to breach the iron cage of the colonizer's theoretical assumptions regarding what may or may not be in the best interests of the colonized citizenry. We must bear in mind that such well-intended social scientists would themselves have to operate against a false ideological background and the systems of domination and control that maintain a stranglehold over the lives and consciousness of the colonized.

When we think of the colonizer's ideology from a radical exteriority, we must also be

mindful of having to assume our own perspective of critical consciousness in the process. That is, our understanding of the colonizer's ideology is not the only factor that needs to be considered. Stated differently, following the development of an ideology from the radical exterior is only one half of the necessary equation that is required to decolonize our mindset and way of thinking. There is also a temporality that serves to impact the coloniality of power and knowledge. The difficulty in acknowledging such a notion of temporality is that it is a matter of accessing our own aesthetic sensibility (Quijano, 2000).

From the radical exteriority of scientific sensibilities, there is no causal relation or reason for allowing time to enter into our understanding of colonized ideology. However, from our individual and collective sense of self, the obviousness of time's impact is an essential part of understanding the coloniality of power and knowledge. When we say that a specific ideology that is generated within the context of Western European sensibilities is contained within a closed system, we are simultaneously encapsulating such a closed system within the framework of a specific point in time. It is only by including the notion of time used in this manner that we can even come to understand the notion of evolution and development of ideas.

However, when time is used in this context it becomes a delimiting factor for our considerations. In the early twentieth century it was common for horses pulling wagons to wear "blinders" to prevent them from seeing and becoming frightened by what they were pulling. In this same way, the structure of a closed and self-contained ideological system also serves to prevent an objective examination of the system itself. This is why the structurality of the system is able to maintain its internal integrity. With respect to the colonized members of a conquered territory, the longer the colonizers maintain their stranglehold over the colonized, the more the dominance of the colonizer will overcome the consciousness of the colonized and, over time, the more overt means of domination will be able to recede in favor of an implicit control over the consciousness of the colonized citizenry.

The effect of time's delimitation of colonized citizens is, at least in one way, manifest in the inability of its colonized citizenry to imagine alternative realities or possibilities. This is to say that the colonizer's way of the world becomes the only way imaginable for its citizenry. In other words, after living over a long period of time acquiring the necessities of life under the colonized power structure of the colonizer, the tangible necessities of life themselves will have been used to reinforce the ideology of the colonizer in the consciousness of the colonized and in time it even becomes possible to have members of the colonized assist in the control over others that are colonized without even realizing that they have also become completely colonized on behalf of the colonizer's ideology. The colonizer's ideology begins to disappear to become our own national ideology and time serves to swallow the colonial past under the horizon of history.

What we come to realize in examining the notions of space and time from the radical exteriority of the colonizer's ideology, then, is the revelation that the historical process itself is an essential element in the development of the institutions of colonial domination. Thus, we are now able to see a doubling regarding the axes of power used by the colonizer to dominate the consciousness of the colonized, a process that can be thought of as a colonial double axis (Mignolo, 2011A). In terms of our accepted world history we are better able to understand how the notion of global expansion and the capitalist economic model upon which it is driven places itself and its core of the Western European worldview as the focal point of enunciation for the control and domination of the world as a whole, while leaving the voices and opinions of other

world entities in a position of subservience. Stated differently, in the expansionist ideology of Western European ideology, we are once again given a worldview that casts Western European ideology in the context of civilization and all other world entities to be seen in the position of barbarism. From the radical exterior, this process is no stranger to Third World underdeveloped countries, women, and people of color. This, in every way, shape, and form, is the ideology of the conqueror seeking world domination.

### **The Development of Latin American Philosophy**

The intended objective of globalization is being presented to the world as an opportunity to ensure fair and equal distributions of commodities, wealth and resources. However, for all those who have lived under colonial control and are now undergoing decolonialization, it is already understood that such promises are structurally meaningless in the face of the colonizers' mechanisms of domination and control. In this context then, we see that Latin American philosophy is doing well and riding the crest of the wave, small as it may be, of humanity's future while representing the interests of all Latin Americans.

The challenges that are ahead for Latin American scholars are beginning to come into focus. It is certainly evident from our current efforts at maintaining ourselves on the radical exterior of Western European modernist ideology. When we look out into the Latin American's worldly activities, we cannot help but acknowledge a growing variety of indigenous movements in various countries within Latin America. Such projects seem to be pragmatic with respect to the needs of indigenous and mestizo people, centering on land ownership, the right to self-determination and cultural revival. It would appear that the time has come to join the philosophical space that has been created by Latin American scholars with the voice of the people, perhaps under the direction of our existing indigenist projects taking place across the Americas. These are the challenges for Latin American scholars for today and for tomorrow.

### **Conclusion**

As depicted in Graphic 1 in the Appendix, within this essay we have framed the development of Latin American philosophy along two lines of thought. These intellectual lines of reasoning began with the now classic debate between Salazar Bondy and Leopoldo Zea. In Bondy, we find that there can be no such thing as a Latin American philosophy until such time that we are able to rid our consciousness of Western European ideology. Martin Baro follows Bondy with the development of a Psychology of Liberation designed for that very purpose. In Castro-Gomez, we find the epistemological basis for this line of reasoning with the aid of Foucault's ontology of the present.

Alternatively, Zea believes that there can be a Latin American philosophy and with the Hegelian dialectic, there began efforts to reconstruct indigenous history and culture from oral tradition. Enrique Dussell advanced the work of Zea by introducing the notion of radical exteriority. Walter Mignolo refines the notion of radical exteriority, while completely rejecting the colonizer's entire system of signification, with his own notion of epistemic disobedience. Both lines of reasoning stemming from Bondy and Zea have contributed significantly in the advancement of Latino American philosophy.

In Graphic 2 in the Appendix, we see the elements of opposition in the debate between the issue of Globalization and Global Unification. Globalization is being advanced on the world

stage as a framework for the proper creation of a sustainable global economy. Proponents are quick to claim that it is only by maintaining a global structure of Capitalist growth worldwide will we be able to assure fair and equitable distribution of resources, wealth and opportunities.

Alternatively, many nations that were previously colonized know better than to believe such a rationale. Instead, these nations are proposing to achieve Global Unification among nations actively engaged in decolonializing their countries and people, for standing together in opposition to all Globalization efforts. Although many Latin American countries are part of these efforts, Latin American philosophy has led the way towards such a global movement with the creation of the notions of radical exteriority and decolonialization. As such, it is a known fact that Globalization leads to domination and only in Global Unification, can there be liberation.

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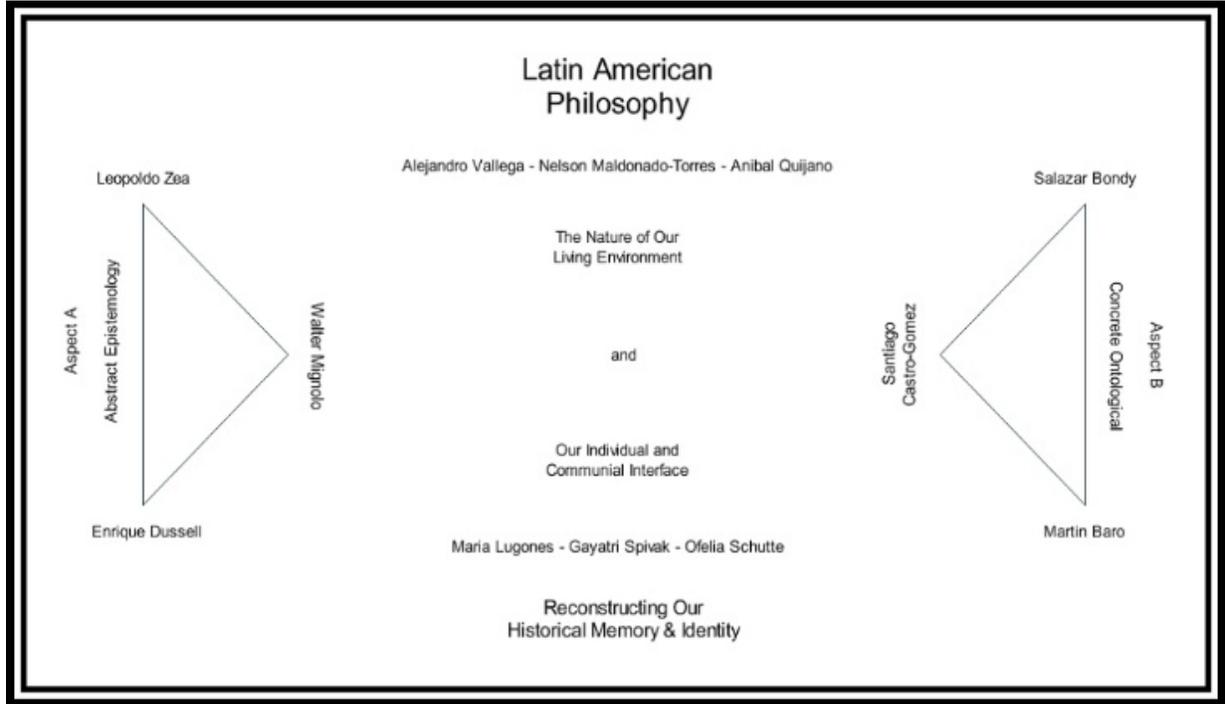
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## Appendix

In Graphic 1 we see the two distinct threads of epistemological thinking in Latino American scholarship. In the abstract epistemology running from Zea, through Dussell and culminating in Mignolo, the unifying thread can be said to be a Latin American variation on the notion of being-in-the-world introduced by Martin Heidegger. In this context, Latin American scholars found themselves able to gain their own voice on the radical exteriority of Western European colonized structurality. In our second thread running from Bondy, through Baro and culminating with Castro-Gomez, the unifying thread is the notion of the “ontology of the present”. In the latter view, loosely based on Hegel’s dictum that history can only be a history of a specific time and place, that is, an ontology of the present, Latino scholars set out to create the possibility for a Latino philosophy by invoking a process of decolonialization of the mind of colonized people and reconstructing indigenous culture and history via a recounting of historical moments in the oral traditions of indigenous culture and ideology.

Graphic 1. The Two Threads in the Development of Latin American Philosophy



In Graphic 2 we can see the major differences between the current efforts at achieving Globalization and those of achieving Global Unification. Here we see the abstract rationale based on Capitalistic motives inherent in Globalization, and the ideological foundation of indigenous beliefs aimed at the liberation of previously colonized indigenous people. Furthermore, Globalization contradicts the fundamental tenant of Modernist methodology intended to reject abstract premises such as those disguised in their motives. Global Unification is based on the true decolonializing efforts of indigenous people worldwide. Thus, Globalization hides under the mask of sustainability while Global Unification is based upon the common human interests of those previously colonized in representing their own people with their own voice.

Graphic 2. The Different Objectives of Globalization and Global Unification

