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Is There a Latin American Philosophy? The Trajectory of a Question

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Abstract. The research articulates a central and recurring question in Latin American philosophical thought: *Is there a Latin American philosophy?* As a guiding thread, we take a seminal article by Argentine philosopher Risieri Frondizi, whose explicit formulation brings to light the specificity of the question itself. Rather than a rhetorical provocation, the question opens a paradox – denying the existence of philosophy in Latin America is already a philosophical act. This dossier explores how Latin American philosophy has responded to its complex relationship with European thought, the colonial legacy, and the aspiration to both originality and universality. The contributions address key issues such as the periodization of Latin American philosophy, the reception of canonical Western figures like Kant and Hegel, and the development of a critical and situated mode of thought that has become a model for decolonial reflection. At the same time, the volume includes contributions that clarify the emergence of analytic philosophy in the region, with particular attention to the development of paraconsistent logic. Far from being derivative, Latin American philosophy is presented here as an original, plural, and evolving intellectual endeavor.

Keywords: Latin America, history of philosophy, philosophical reception, decolonial thought, originality

Conflict of interest. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Существует ли латиноамериканская философия? Траектория вопроса

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Аннотация. В исследовании сформулирован центральный и часто повторяющийся вопрос латиноамериканской философской мысли: *существует ли латиноамериканская философия?* В качестве путеводной нити мы возьмем основополагающую статью аргентинского философа Рисьери Фрондизи, чья четкая формулировка проливает свет на специфику самого вопроса. Этот вопрос не является риторической провокацией, он раскрывает парадокс: отрицание существования философии в Латинской Америке уже является философским актом. В этом разделе исследуется, как латиноамериканская философия отреагировала на свои сложные взаимоотношения с европейской мыслью, колониальное наследие и стремление как к оригинальности, так и к универсальности. Материалы посвящены таким ключевым вопросам, как периодизация латиноамериканской философии, восприятие канонических западных фигур, таких как Кант и Гегель, и развитие критического и взвешенного образа мышления, который стал образцом для деколонизальной рефлексии. В то же время в раздел включены материалы, которые проясняют возникновение аналитической философии в регионе, уделяя особое внимание развитию параконсистентной логики. Латиноамериканская философия представлена здесь не как производная, а как оригинальное, множественное и развивающееся интеллектуальное направление.

Ключевые слова: Латинская Америка, история философии, философская рецепция, деколонизальная мысль, оригинальность

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The title of a 1949 article by Argentine philosopher Risieri Frondizi, “*Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?*” [1], marks a pivotal moment in Latin American philosophical reflection. Although selecting this particular essay as a paradigmatic reference might appear somewhat arbitrary, it serves here as a productive thread through which to engage a question that has continued to shape philosophical discourse in the region since the mid-twentieth century: whether a distinct, legitimate, and autonomous philosophical tradition can be said to exist in Latin America.

The very possibility of posing such a question reveals a distinctive feature of Latin American philosophical practice. On the one hand, it aligns with the critical vocation inherent to philosophy since its inception – the interrogation of its own conditions of possibility. On the other hand, as Frondizi himself notes, the question should not be dismissed as mere rhetorical provocation. Rather, it constitutes a genuine inquiry into the possibility of a Latin American philosophy that transcends its institutional existence within academic settings.

Pursuing Frondizi’s question further, one finds it unfolding under the shadow of a paradox with Aristotelian roots: to deny the existence of philosophy -in Latin America- by a Latin American is already to engage in philosophical activity. However, Frondizi did not observe the inexistence of philosophy. On the contrary, he noted an exponential increase in the production of texts aspiring to philosophical status. The problem, for him at least, was that this proliferation was not accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality or depth of their content. In this sense, the question – as framed by Frondizi – ultimately becomes a reflection on the originality and relevance of the philosophical work produced in Latin American contexts.

Since then, the weight of this question has exerted a lasting influence on the development of philosophical thought south of the Río Bravo. Various authors have proposed distinct criteria for addressing it, offering retrospective assessments of the existence – or absence – of a Latin American philosophical tradition. Within this framework, the debate has crystallized around key concepts such as originality, authenticity, and recognition, which have served to articulate the regional specificity of philosophical reflection [2. P. 5].

Returning to the impossibility of denying philosophy, this internal contradiction inherent in the question itself does not, paradoxically, close the debate but rather deepens it. To inquire from Latin America into the possibility of philosophy in Latin America is to position oneself at the threshold of a different kind of reflection. Thus, the issue of the originality of Latin American philosophical thought also transforms into a question of originarity: is it possible to conceive of a second origin for philosophy?

Philosophical ideas on the continent emerge from a consciousness of origin, aware that philosophy is a historical inheritance of a European colonizing culture, but also with the intuition that it can be reappropriated as a universal endeavor grounded in the experience of the colonized. Originality, then, is a demand that arises as a consequence of the pivotal situation represented by the new understanding of the world that emerged after the discovery of America. For Latin American philosophers during the twentieth century, the experience of philosophy was associated with the alternative of conceiving philosophy in this context either as a parallel development to European philosophy – originating in Greece but taking root in new soil – or as a philosophy capable of entering into dialogue with a pre-existing, distinctly American worldview.

Fronzizi himself offers a response grounded in a logical-analytical strategy: he adopts – though without providing an essential definition – a concept inherited from philosophy and embedded within the Western tradition, and examines whether this concept can be historically verified in the thought produced in Latin America. He does not deny the existence of relevant thinkers or philosophical reflection; rather, he questions whether an autonomous philosophy has existed – one not subordinated to extraphilosophical interests [1. P. 346]. In this respect, his tone is predominantly skeptical regarding the existing philosophical production, while simultaneously expressing cautious hopefulness for the future.

Each in its own way, the articles comprising this dossier address different facets that frame the question of the existence of philosophy in Latin America. First, they suggest a structural tension between European and Latin American thought: “We have transcended many levels and not a few limitations, but we are still weighed down by European conceptions. Up to the present, Ibero-American philosophy is simply the rethinking of the European problems that have reached our shores” [1. P. 351]. Second, the dossier raises the problem of periodization and the historical articulation of this relationship within the context of unequal and heterogeneous national traditions [3]. Third, it anticipates a challenge that would gain increasing relevance in subsequent decades: the articulation of the ties and tensions between thought north and south of the continent. As Fronzizi claims: “the two Americas are separated by dissimilar concerns; they are interested in different problems” [4. P. 619].

The contributions compiled here address, from various perspectives, the question of the status, conditions, and possibilities of philosophy in Latin America. While they do not aim to provide a definitive answer, they share a common concern: to think from the South without relinquishing philosophy’s universal aspiration. Having already established the general perspective of the dossier, we will now briefly present the content of the various contributions.

Pablo Guadarrama offers a comprehensive review of one of the central issues in the study of philosophy in Latin America: its periodization. His analysis provides an overarching view of the key moments and defining characteristics that have shaped Latin American philosophy – from scholastic debates concerning the

humanity of indigenous peoples to contemporary currents such as Marxism, philosophical Christianity, liberation philosophy, and decolonial thought. Far from being a mere repetition of European ideas, Guadarrama demonstrates that Latin American philosophy emerges as a process of mental and cultural emancipation, characterized notably by a practical and counter-hegemonic humanism that stands out as one of its defining features.

As the history depicted by Guadarrama shows, one of the recurring themes in reflections on philosophy in Latin America concerns the various ways in which European thought has been received and reinterpreted. In this dossier, the contributions by Laura Pelegrin, on the one hand, and Eduardo Assalone and Hugo Figueredo, on the other, offer two distinct perspectives on the “Argentine” trajectories of Kant and Hegel. Pelegrin’s study reconstructs the emergence of Kantian philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires through the work of Mario Caimi. Her analysis highlights an interpretative orientation centered on the problem of method as the guiding thread of critical philosophy – a focus that has decisively shaped local Kantian exegesis. This approach is further characterized by its critique of psychologism and its emphasis on the centrality of sensibility. Regarding Hegel, Assalone and Figueredo raise a further issue: the conceptual and methodological limits of “reception” in philosophy. Their study explores the history of Hegelian reception in Argentina, the task of constructing an archive of local ‘Hegelianism,’ its disciplinary framing, and the broader philosophical implications of the very notion of reception. They argue that without a critical stance, the concept of reception risks becoming methodologically diffuse.

Dante Ramaglia returns to the enduring tension between the historical particularity and the universal aspiration of philosophy, focusing on contemporary issues and debates within Latin American philosophical thought. In his account, these discussions revolve around two central axes: the conceptual delimitation of what constitutes a “Latin American” philosophy, and the critical role such philosophy must play in relation to its own socio-historical context. These tensions give rise both to critical genealogies of ideas and to the development of socially and politically engaged philosophies with emancipatory intent.

The contributions by Fernanda Diab and Clara Pinton explore how the emancipatory intent of Latin American philosophy takes shape in the works of the Uruguayan thinker Carlos Vaz Ferreira and the Argentine-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel. Diab examines Vaz Ferreira’s treatment of polarization, not as a merely explanatory issue, but as a normative problem – a matter of “ideals” that can be addressed through non-exclusionary alternatives. Within this framework, concepts such as false opposition, exclusivism, and extremism are identified as obstacles to the peaceful resolution of conflict. Vaz Ferreira thus offers valuable philosophical tools for rethinking the contemporary threats facing democracy, through a systematic approach that interweaves epistemological, psychological, ethical, and political dimensions. Clara Pinton, in turn, analyzes Dussel’s reconstruction of the origins of modernity from a decolonial perspective. By linking

the *ego conquiro* to the *ego cogito*, Dussel argues that modern subjectivity is grounded in the conquest and exclusion of the colonial Other – an operation that is not peripheral but constitutive of modern thought. From this standpoint, Dussel's critique calls for a reconstruction of the philosophical canon – one that acknowledges its colonial foundations and creates space for historically silenced voices.

Philosophy in Latin America is not defined solely by its critical engagement with colonial legacies. It also maintains a meaningful and dynamic dialogue with other intellectual traditions, particularly North American analytic philosophy, and has produced significant work in specialized fields such as logic and the philosophy of mind. In this respect, contemporary Latin American philosophy has yielded original and impactful contributions. Lauro de Matos Nunes Filho, for instance, offers a comprehensive overview of the development of paraconsistent logic in the region, focusing on the pioneering work of Newton da Costa in Brazil. This non-classical logical framework challenges core principles of classical logic – such as the law of non-contradiction – and opens new formal and theoretical avenues that extend beyond technical domains to influence broader philosophical inquiry.

A similar approach is taken by André Leclerc, who examines the consolidation of analytic philosophy in Latin America and its role in shaping current debates in the philosophy of mind. This philosophical orientation, grounded in logic, language, and a strong commitment to scientific rigor, found fertile ground in countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. Philosophers like Eduardo Rabossi, Maite Ezcurdia, Walter Carnielli, Marco Ruffino, and Ernesto Perini Frizzera have played a central role in establishing an analytic approach to issues of thought, subjectivity, and knowledge – often engaging with ordinary language analysis, non-classical logic, and contemporary epistemology. Through journals such as *Crítica*, *Análisis Filosófico*, *Principia*, and *Analytica*, and through international scholarly networks, analytic philosophy in Latin America has developed a distinctive voice that engages meaningfully with global philosophical debates while remaining rooted in local contexts.

Danny Marrero addresses pressing philosophical issues at the intersection of ecological protection and human rights in Latin America. His contribution focuses on how the recognition of rivers as legal subjects has enabled Afro-descendant communities, Indigenous peoples, and future generations to introduce alternative legal and philosophical frameworks into mainstream legal theory. Marrero analyzes landmark cases such as *Atrato River v. Presidency of Colombia* and *Future Generations v. Ministry of Environment*, demonstrating that the attribution of legal rights to rivers is not merely symbolic but essential for ensuring human survival. These cases highlight a deep interdependence between human and ecological well-being and challenge the conventional Nature/Humanity divide by affirming that the protection of rivers is inseparable from the protection of life itself.

Finally, Ricardo Espinoza Lolas and Pol Ruiz de Gauna introduce the concept-image of the “Barca del NosOtros” (“Boat of the WeOthers”) as a philosophical

expression of the human condition in confrontation with the real. This metaphor seeks to articulate the finite, mixed, and contradictory nature of the subject within contemporary capitalism. The image of the boat captures both the acceptance of contingency and the persistent betrayal of that acceptance, thus exploring the existential and ontological tensions of the present from a radically situated perspective.

Taken together, these studies reveal the richness, diversity, and depth of philosophical thought in Latin America. Far from being a mere echo of European traditions, Latin American philosophy emerges here as an original, critical, and creative intellectual practice, deeply engaged with its history, its conflicts, and its future.

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