It is not an exaggeration to say that the history of Latin American philosophy does not have a presence in general histories of Western philosophy. An even superficial perusal of those histories, including some produced in Latin America itself, reveals that the history of Latin American philosophy is not taken seriously. Latin American philosophy is considered marginal to the history of Western thought, a development of concern only to a few specialists who have particular interests in Latin American culture. Moreover, when mentioned, Latin American thought is often characterized as something idiosyncratic, and even exotic. Historiographers of the philosophical mainstream, then, do not feel the need to make reference to Latin American philosophy.

This fact is well known to Latin American philosophers. Indeed, many reasons and explanations of it have been proposed. The well-known Peruvian historian, Augusto Salazar Bondy, claimed two decades ago that it is in part the Latin American complex of inferiority with respect to Europe and the United States that has contributed to the alienation of Latin American philosophy from the mainstream of Western philosophy. And philosophy-of-liberation historians do not tire of reminding Latin Americans of their intellectually servile attitude, in part imposed by a system of ideological domination of first-world countries that emphasizes the marginal intellectual situation of Latin America.

Moreover, the view that Latin American philosophy generally lacks originality is a common place. It is expressed by Latin American philosophers of very different persuasions, and with reason. Latin American philosophy has not, for the most part, moved beyond the repetition of philosophical views and positions developed elsewhere, primarily in Europe, but more recently in the United States as well. Occasionally, we find philosophers who go beyond repetition, appropriating the problems that prompted the views they borrow, but it is seldom that we find even an
attempt to give a solution to a problem that goes beyond what others have already suggested, let alone come up with a new solution to it. The most one can expect is the attempt to try to adapt the views of Europeans and North Americans to the cultural, political, and economic conditions in Latin America. There is, of course, authenticity and even originality in this sort of attempt, but it is still a far cry from what many philosophers in Europe and the United States routinely do, or at least attempt to do.

Some critics of Latin American philosophy go further than this even, claiming that there are in fact no philosophers in Latin America, and there is little of philosophical value in the so-called history of Latin American philosophy. After all, they argue, where is the evidence of the impact of Latin American philosophy outside of Latin America? Indeed, even Latin Americans think so poorly of their own philosophers that they seldom refer to their views as anything that deserves attention. Yes, they often talk of them as important figures in the development of ideas in their countries, or even in Latin America as a whole. But do Latin Americans take seriously the ideas of their philosophical ancestors and of many of their contemporaries who presumably do philosophy when they are addressing philosophical issues and problems? No, when Latin Americans look for philosophical views to adopt, or even to criticize, they turn away from Latin America and pay attention rather to those of European and North American philosophers.

The situation, then, is clear. Latin American philosophy is generally regarded as lacking originality and is not taken seriously even by the Latin American philosophical community. In this essay, I would like to suggest that one important reason why Latin American philosophy is not as original as it could be is that Latin American philosophers use the history of philosophy in their philosophizing and in their teaching of philosophy in a nonphilosophical way and, therefore, suppress rather than develop genuine philosophical activity and originality. Moreover, I would like to suggest that one important reason why Latin American philosophy is so disparaged, both within and without Latin America, is not just that it does not quite measure up to the philosophy carried out in Europe and North America. There is also another reason, for in spite of its faults and shortcomings, there is merit in what many Latin American philosophers have done in the way of philosophy. The reason that Latin American philosophy is not considered highly by philosophers goes beyond its quality; it is that the history of Latin American philosophy is also, like all the history of philosophy in Latin America, done nonphilosophically. Latin American philosophy has had very little success in, we might say, selling itself to philosophers within and without Latin America because its historians have treated it nonphilosophically.
But what does it mean to say that Latin American philosophy is studied and taught nonphilosophically? This should become clear as we go along, particularly when I reveal the shortcomings of different methodologies used in relation to Latin American philosophy, but also when I present the way I believe it should be studied and taught. Nonetheless, perhaps I should anticipate what I say later by adding here three points. The first is that the aim of philosophy is to develop a view of the world, or any of its parts, which seeks to be accurate, consistent, comprehensive, and supported by sound evidence. As such, philosophy can be distinguished from other disciplines of learning in two ways: (1) It is more general insofar as all other disciplines of learning are concerned with restricted areas of knowledge involving specific methodologies, particular objects or kinds of objects, or both; and (2) it involves areas of investigation that are uniquely philosophical such as ethics, logic, and metaphysics. The second point is that philosophy concerns the solution of philosophical problems, that is, of problems that surface precisely when one tries to achieve the aim just stated, either because of conceptual inconsistencies, empirical evidence, or inadequacies of other sorts. Finally, philosophy is not merely a descriptive enterprise; it also involves interpretation and evaluation. To proceed philosophically, then, is to proceed so as to achieve the aims of the discipline; and to proceed nonphilosophically is precisely to proceed in ways that divert oneself from achieving those aims.

Now, if the culprit of both the state of Latin American philosophy and the lack of reputation it enjoys is the way the history of philosophy is studied, one way to try to remedy the situation is to eliminate the culprit. Let us do away completely with the study of the history of philosophy in Latin America and concentrate on doing philosophy. And, indeed, there have been Latin American voices who have suggested just that. Some, echoing Carnap, have gone so far as to say that the knowledge of certain dead languages, such as Latin, is an obstacle to philosophy.

This solution seems to be an easy way out of the situation, but in fact it is not a realistic alternative for at least four reasons. First, although it is in principle possible to do philosophy without engaging in any kind of study of the history of philosophy, in fact this is almost impossible, and even those philosophers who pride themselves in doing philosophy nonhistorically, often present their views in reaction to the views of others. That these others may be contemporaries of theirs does not change the fact that their views, having been presented in texts, are part of history, even if only recent history. Second, philosophy is taught with texts from historical figures, however recent they may be, and to teach it otherwise would be both difficult and undesirable. It is important to recognize that most philosophers everywhere rely heavily on historical texts of philosophy for
teaching the discipline and to expect a change in this would be unrealistic. Third, the probability that Latin American philosophers will abandon the interest in their own intellectual history, and even in their own philosophical history, is remote at a time when most parts of the world are seeing a revival of nationalism, particularism, ethnicity, and in general a desire to search for roots and cultural identity. Finally, the history of philosophy is an incredibly rich reservoir of philosophical opinion which, if treated correctly, can and does serve to help the contemporary philosopher.

In principle, then, there is no reason why the study of the history of philosophy should be an obstacle to philosophy. Rather than completely discarding the history of philosophy, both the history of philosophy in general and the history of Latin American philosophy in particular, the solution to the problematic situation of Latin American philosophy today is to teach and do both histories in a way that can help the philosophical task and underscore the philosophical worth of Latin American philosophy.

**Wrong Approaches to the History of Philosophy**

How do Latin American philosophers use the history of philosophy? It would be easy to answer this question if the way the history of philosophy is used in Latin America were uniform. Unfortunately, there is not a single way in which the history of philosophy is used in philosophical contexts in Latin America, and indeed there is such variety in that use that an accurate description of it would require more space and time than I have at my disposal. Given these limitations, we must content ourselves with the brief examination of some of the ways in which Latin American philosophers use the history of philosophy, so that we may later compare them with a more philosophically fruitful approach. These examples, although limited, represent some of the most popular approaches to the history of philosophy and thus should be sufficient to make my point, even if they do not prove in any conclusive way, the view I wish to propose.

I shall refer to three historiographical approaches: the culturalist, the ideological, and the doxographical.

**The Culturalist Approach**

The culturalist approach tries to understand the philosophical ideas from the past as expressions of the complex cultural matrix from which they germinated. The emphasis in this approach is not to understand philosophical ideas considered as ideas that are supposed to address specific philosophical
issues and solve specific philosophical problems formulated by particular persons. This approach conceives philosophical ideas as part and parcel of a culture, as representative phenomena from a period or epoch. Historians who employ this strategy concentrate on the description, and to a certain extent on the interpretation of the past, but they are opposed to its evaluation. The culturalist understands past philosophies as part of a general cultural development, but is not interested in the philosophical value of those philosophies. The preoccupation with tying philosophical ideas with other aspects of culture, such as art, literature, science, religion, social customs, and the like, results in general rather than particular analyses of these ideas.

Culturalists, moreover, are concerned with the whole picture and because of that they often neglect details. This leads frequently to the neglect of arguments and particular philosophical views. The historical accounts of culturalists have little use for even the cursory analysis of past arguments and philosophical views of individual philosophers. They seek general conclusions that they can then relate to other cultural phenomena.

Culturalists seek to explain why this or that idea arose, but they do so in terms of forces external to philosophy and to what the great majority of philosophers consider their task. The analysis of arguments or particular opinions, then, is regarded as unimportant unless it can be used to tell us something about the spirit or mind of the times. Philosophical ideas are treated as symptoms of other factors which are more important for the historian to understand.

The aim of historians of philosophy is not to evaluate past ideas or to see them as products of individual minds. Rather, their aim is to reveal the connections between those ideas and the cultural mentality and background from which they sprung and which they represent. Ideas, so the argument goes, are not disembodied abstractions and do not result from abstract arguments; ideas are acts which take place in particular circumstances and histories of ideas that discuss ideas abstractly, treating them as entities isolated from the cultural matrix that gave them birth, are neither history nor philosophy. The task of the history of philosophy, in brief, is to make clear the relations among ideas, considered as cultural human responses and reactions, to the circumstances that give rise to them, thus revealing the conceptual foundations of the culture in which they originate.

In Latin America, the culturalist approach has been extensively used in part as a result of the great influence of José Ortega y Gasset's perspectival and culturalist conception of philosophy, beginning in the second decade of this century. Among the most important exponents of this kind of historiography are Samuel Ramos and Félix Schwartzmann, for whom the study of Latin American thought is closely related to Latin American culture. For both, Latin American philosophy, and indeed any philosophy,
must be approached as an expression of the culture in which it is found and, therefore, as a product that makes no sense unless it is placed in the cultural context in which it originated.

Ramos's *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* is not a good example of the culturalist approach in the history of philosophy insofar as it is not a book about the history of philosophy. Yet, it was this book that created the framework that was eventually adopted for the culturalist study of philosophical ideas. For this reason, it is a classic locus.

The book begins with a chapter entitled, "The Imitation of Europe in the XIXth Century," which in turn begins with a discussion of method. It is here that we find the parameters for the study of philosophy as the cultural study of the history of philosophy. The discussion of method ends with the following significant paragraph:

Let us leave aside for a moment the question of whether "Mexican culture" has a reality or not, and let us devote ourselves to think how that culture would be in case it existed. This does not mean that we locate abstract deduction in a different plane than effective realities. We know that a culture is determined by a certain mental structure of man and the accidents of his history. Let us find out these facts, and then the question may be formulated as follows: given a specific human mentality and certain accidents of its history, what type of culture can it have?

To this must be added that Ramos and his followers had inherited Ortega's view that philosophy is a cultural expression. Obviously, if this is the nature of philosophy, the history of philosophy is the history of a cultural expression and must be studied in the same way other cultural expressions are studied. Philosophical interpretation and evaluation independently of cultural considerations are superfluous, if not impossible; what counts is the discovery of the relation of philosophy to the culture at large. The job of the philosopher in general and the historian of philosophy in particular, is to uncover these relations. Abstract questions of metaphysics and logic must be translated into concrete questions about the attitudes, values, and customs of particular cultures. It is significant that Ramos's book goes on to discuss such topics as cultural context, indigenism, the Mexican bourgeoisie, the influence of Spanish and French culture on Mexico, and so on.

It is not my intention to criticize this approach insofar as it reveals the relations between philosophical ideas on one hand and the profound and frequently unconscious cultural currents which lead us to develop and adopt those ideas on the other. Culturalists often provide us with interesting and useful insights, in many cases their conclusions and explanations
are not only correct but also enlightening. For example, it may be true that the main reason Latin American philosophers ultimately rejected nineteenth-century positivism is that this philosophy was contrary to cultural values deeply ingrained in Latin American culture and society. But that has only limited interest for the philosopher. It does no doubt illustrate how non-philosophical factors play a role in philosophy, but it tells us nothing concerning the philosophical reasons Latin American philosophers gave for rejecting it. From the philosophical perspective, it is not important that Latin American philosophers rejected the position because they were culturally Latin Americans, but rather that they proposed philosophical reasons in support of their rejection.

The kind of cultural particularism involved in the culturalist approach neither was, nor is it in the present, something attractive to philosophers in general, including those who study the history of Latin American philosophy. Philosophers are attracted by philosophical reasons. The cultural analysis helps us to understand what the thinkers of a particular culture have in mind, or had in mind if they belong to the past, and the cultural reasons why they do, or did, so. But that kind of analysis does not make clear the philosophical reasons they consider to be the foundations of those ideas and, therefore, it does not help, and in fact it may be an obstacle to the philosophical evaluation of such ideas. The kind of causal explanation favored by culturalists, then, separates them from those who take a philosophical approach to the history of philosophy. 15

But this is not all; philosophers from the present cannot expect to understand philosophers from the past unless they themselves play the role of philosophers. This is the only way in which one can truly understand what one's philosophical ancestors had in mind. The similarity in the enterprises between the two is what makes success possible.

In short, the fundamentally nonphilosophical character of the culturalist approach, so popular in Latin America, both in the teaching of the history of philosophy and in the writing of the history of Latin American philosophy, stands on the way of the development of a truly philosophical spirit and of the appreciation of the contributions of Latin American philosophers to philosophy.

The Ideological Approach

The principal characteristic of this approach is that it involves a commitment to something alien to the history of philosophy. Those who use this approach study the history of philosophy because they think that study helps them reach a goal to which they are committed but which is not a
philosophical goal. In some cases the goal is disinterested and worthy of admiration, but in other cases it is not. In the majority of cases it is mixed, and results from a lack of clear awareness in those who adopt it concerning what they believe and the aims they pursue. Ideologues, in contrast with philosophers and historians, do not seek the truth; they believe they have already found it, or they think it is impossible to find. They therefore use the history of philosophy only for rhetorical reasons, that is, to convince an audience of what they themselves have already accepted. As a consequence, this approach often displays an apologetic tone, and uses well-known formulas and clichés that it takes from the ideological current within which it functions. Also characteristic of it is an excessive sensitivity to criticism as well as a marked belligerence against any comment that might be construed even as remotely critical.

The nonphilosophical goal of the ideological approach allows for the use of nonphilosophical means to spread philosophical ideas. Proselytizing and even force are not to be ruled out. And there is also the possibility of a cynical aim in ideology and that there is no real and true belief in the ideas promoted by the ideologue. For the ideologue what is important is the object of commitment, which is neither philosophy nor history.

A very interesting case of the use of the ideological approach in Latin America occurred in the nineteenth century. As is well known, at the time Latin America was going through one of its many periods of social, political, and economic instability. Latin American intellectuals, concerned about the situation, imported from Europe the set of ideas we now know as positivism. In Mexico, as Zea tells us, positivism became the official philosophy of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. Some of those who adopted the new ideology and studied the ideas of Comte, Spencer, and other favorite authors of positivists, did so because they were convinced that the positivist program was the best way to put an end to the instability of Latin America. This was clearly a worthy motive that we find in some Latin American positivists like, for example, the great Argentinean José Ingenieros. Others, however, were interested in personal gain, the continuity of the status quo that allowed them to have and preserve a privileged position in society. This latter motive, obviously, was not disinterested. Regardless of the motive Latin American positivists had, however, their commitment was something alien to the ideas they adopted to reach it. The ideas they studied, defended, and discussed were nothing more than instruments and means to get something else. The interest of many Latin American positivists on the philosophical thought that preceded them was ideological.

The reasons for the popularity of the ideological approach are quite obvious. No one can fail to understand the temptation to use and endorse ideas to bring about benefits to ourselves and those we care for. Indeed,
I doubt anyone would object to the use of ideas to bring about beneficial changes to society. But the benefits this approach produces are unrelated to the history of philosophy, for they involve social and practical gains, not the understanding of the philosophical past. In fact, it is difficult to see that ideas from the past can be truly understood when the overall aim of the one who seeks to understand them is something other than their understanding. In short, there does not seem to be any advantage in adopting the ideological approach to study the history of philosophy, but its adoption has plenty of disadvantages.

Among the most serious of these disadvantages is the loss of objectivity. The emphasis on useful results, whether intended for the social group or the individual, interferes with the objective grasp of ideas themselves, leading to interpretations polluted by mercenary considerations derived from the value they have for something else. This attitude is a step backward to the time preceding the discovery of science by the pre-Socratics, for it is characterized by a nonliberal understanding of knowledge and the history of thought, where knowledge and history have value only insofar as they can be used for some practical purpose. This devaluation of objectivity may not just result in an unintended distortion of the past, but sometimes leads to intended revisions of it in order to bring it in line with the positions necessary to reach desired goals.

A second important disadvantage of the ideological approach is that it is impossible to carry on a dialogue with those who adopt it. The practical aim the ideologue pursues is an obstacle to dialogue. True dialogue requires the exchange of ideas with a view toward mutual and deeper understanding because in all dialogue there is the implication of the possibility of change in perspective in those engaged in dialogue. But ideologues leave no room for such possibility. They are interested in pushing their point of view so they can achieve the practical aim they have in mind. If they engage in what appears to be a dialogue, they do so only as a means of achieving their predetermined goal and only insofar as it does not interfere with that goal. There is no exchange of ideas, and there is no possibility of change of opinion on the part of the ideologue.

This closed attitude and the duplicity with which ideologues engage in what appears to be dialogue has earned them both a bad name and the contempt of serious historians of philosophy and philosophers. For the conscious and willing use of the history of philosophy for aims alien to that history is repugnant to the historical spirit. It reveals either a cynical and sophistical attitude toward historical knowledge or a naive, quasi-religious commitment to a cause, and both are insurmountable obstacles to the history of philosophy. The history of philosophy requires description in addition to interpretation and evaluation, but ideologues are concerned only
accepted and unquestionable, there can be very little hope of achieving the goals of philosophy, for the road to ideology and apology is very different from the one necessary for the development of philosophy as I have presented it.

The Doxographical Approach

The main feature of doxographical approaches is their emphasis on uncritical description. The doxographer aims to present views and ideas in a descriptive fashion without critical evaluation, and even discourages interpretation. Elsewhere I have distinguished three different kinds of doxography found in histories of philosophy: life-and-thought, univocal-question, and history-of-ideas doxographies. Because of restrictions of space and the fact that Latin America is the first where it has been most frequently used, I shall only discuss life-and-thought doxography.

The most important feature of the life-and-thought doxographical approach is its concentration on the facts of the life and what are considered to be the fundamental ideas of various authors who are discussed serially. No attempt is made to discuss the reasons on the basis of which the figures in question reach their conclusions, and there is not much in the way of subtle interpretation or evaluation of their views. Although the aim of life-and-thought doxography is historical, to the degree that it seeks to provide accurate information about the past, those who practice this method treat philosophers and their ideas to a great extent as atomic units unconnected with each other. They usually pay no attention to the historical circumstances that may have had a bearing on the philosophers' thinking, and their ideas are treated for the most part as single occurrences and listed as parts of a kind of creed to which the philosophers in question adhered.

It is true that doxographers sometimes gather philosophers into schools, but this is done rather mechanically and serves more to keep them separate than to show the historical connections among them. Thus, for example, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume are gathered and treated together in the group of British empiricists because they all had similar views concerning human understanding. And Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz are put together into the group of Continental rationalists because they also held similar views of human knowledge, which differed substantially from the view of empiricists. But in both cases doxographers tend to ignore the connection among members of the groups. In contrast, they pay particular attention to chronology. A very important aspect of doxographies of the kind we are examining is temporal succession. Authors are arranged chronologically rather than in an order that expresses the historical interrelations among them.
This kind of history of philosophy does not reveal the historical connections among past philosophers and their views. Moreover, it distorts our perception of the way in which philosophical ideas are generated and develop because it does not present them as solutions to the problems that philosophers intended to solve through them. An accurate historical account of philosophical ideas must present ideas in their proper context as solutions to problems if that is in fact how they were meant. To this extent, then, the life-and-thought doxographical approach may be considered not only unhistorical but also historically distorting. In addition, this approach is philosophically superficial, because it does not consider ideas and arguments in depth and evades the kind of interpretation and evaluation that are essential to a good philosophical account of the past.

Still, we should not judge this approach too harshly. First, it should be noted that some of those who have adopted it have had a limited aim in mind. They have not been trying to reconstruct the history of philosophy or to give a detailed account of it. They were trying rather to present us with some basic information about past philosophers and their views. They were writing information manuals, the sort of thing we find in encyclopedias and the like. Clearly, this information is useful and the task of gathering it is not only legitimate but also historically relevant and necessary. We need to have works of reference where we can look up dates, titles of books, summaries of thought, and biographical information. This is, in fact, what we find in some classic doxographical works.

The main problem with life-and-thought doxography when used in the history of philosophy is not what it achieves, but the fact that it may be taken for more than it is and some historians will consider themselves satisfied with it. The history of philosophy entails much more than the doxographer of this sort gives us: It requires critical analyses of ideas and the arguments used to support them, and also historically accurate accounts of the relations among authors and their views. Doxographies have a place in the history of philosophy, but it is a very limited place. Moreover, if the history of philosophy is treated doxographically in the classroom, it gives a distorted view of the discipline, discouraging such fundamental elements of its practice as argumentation and evaluation.

In Latin America, the doxographical approach is frequently used in the classroom and in the writing of histories of philosophy. Examples of its use in studies of Latin American philosophy are common. Among these, perhaps one that stands out is the History of Philosophical Doctrines in Latin America by Francisco Larroyo and Edmundo Escobar. This book is little more than a compilation of data on the history of Latin American philosophy and yet it has been used widely to teach philosophy in Latin America.
The book is divided into three sections. The first two are devoted to methodological issues concerning philosophy and philosophical historiography. They take up about a fifth of the book. In the remaining two-hundred pages, the authors go through the complete history of Latin American philosophical ideas, from pre-Columbian thought to the present. These are divided into seven chapters arranged chronologically and seriatim as follows: (1) "Pre-Columbian Thought"; (2) "Transplantation, Propagation, and Doctrinal Controversies"; (3) "Introduction to Modern Philosophy"; (4) "Americanist Doctrine, Enlightenment and Idealism"; (5) "Eclecticism, Utopian Socialism, and Positivism"; (6) "Overcoming Positivism and Philosophy of Freedom"; and (7) "Catholic Philosophy, Historical Materialism, Critical Idealism, Phenomenology, Existentialism, Material Theory of Values, Analytical Philosophy, History of Ideas." In these chapters, facts about the life and doctrines of the main representatives of the schools listed are packed together mercilessly. Consider, for example, the discussions of phenomenology, existentialism, and the material theory of values, which takes up eleven pages of the sixty-five devoted to chapter 7. More than thirty authors are discussed. Most of them receive no more than a brief mention or a short paragraph with a few important facts about their lives and doctrines. Their philosophical views are summarized in brief, descriptive statements that make no attempt at interpreting their views or explaining their significance. In general these "descriptions," devoid of interpretation and evaluation, lack both historical and philosophical interest. Consider the following comments:

In Bolivia, Augusto Pescador, a Spanish emigree, was professor of the Universidad of La Paz from 1939 to 1955. His thought was articulated based on Hartmann. Since 1955, he is professor at the Universidad Austral of Chile. (Works: Lógica, Sobre lo que no sirve, etc.)

In the Dominican Republic, Andrés Avelino has been concerned with logical problems. Risieri Frondizi (b. 1910), professor in Buenos Aires since 1935 and founder of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Tucumán (1938–40), has been in charge of chairs of logic, aesthetics, and history of ideas, in Argentina, Venezuela, and the USA. For Frondizi, philosophy is a theory of the totality of human experience. Underlining the importance of the self as a dynamic structure constituted by living, interacting acts with other subjects and things, criticizes substantialist anthropology and psychology. In axiology, he takes a position contrary to subjectivism and objectivism, maintaining that value has to be understood in a relation of dependence to a complex of
social and individual elements and circumstances. (Works: El punto de partida del filósofo, 1945; Substancia y función en el problema del yo, 1952; ¿Qué son los valores? 1958)

In short, because of the nonphilosophical character of the doxographical approach, this approach interferes with the development of philosophy in Latin America and also is an obstacle to the proper appreciation of the contribution of Latin Americans to philosophy. Doxography lacks the dimensions of interpretation and evaluation essential to the philosophical task of developing a comprehensive and adequate view of the world.

Other Methodologies

In spite of the great differences between the three historiographical approaches I have described—the culturalist, the ideological, and the doxographical—there is a common factor that unites them and that functions as a common obstacle for the philosophical appreciation of the ideas about which they try to give a historical account: They lack the appreciation of philosophical ideas in themselves, of their relations, and of the value of those ideas. Philosophers are interested in truth and in what the history of philosophy has contributed to that truth. They want to advance their knowledge not only of the facts from the past, but more importantly of truth itself; they want their study of the history of philosophy to help them deepen their philosophical knowledge. But none of the three approaches presented makes possible this kind of advancement, or furthers the appreciation of the contribution of historical ideas to philosophy. This is the reason why histories that use the approaches we have described do not help create interest in Latin American thought or promote the practice of philosophy in Latin America.

Obviously, as mentioned earlier, historians of Latin American philosophy and teachers of philosophy in Latin America have not restricted themselves to the approaches I have described. Indeed, they use many others. For example, many use what I have called elsewhere the scholarly approach, which seeks to establish facts from the past in an objective form, isolating them as far as possible from interpretation and evaluation. There are also sociopolitical approaches, which search for the connection between the development of philosophical ideas and social and political events from the past. Eschalogists present us with a historical teleology that moves toward predetermined ends. More recently, liberationists and postmodernist histories have become fashionable. According to these, the function of the historian is to construct (perhaps I should say “make
up”) the history of Latin American philosophical thought in accordance with the underlying political program favored by members of this movement. And there are many others. But I need not say more, for the common factor to all these approaches is the same one common to the ones I have given as examples before: the lack of philosophical aim.

What should we do then? Is there no solution to this problem? Is there a historiographical approach that could overcome the mentioned obstacles and is available to Latin American philosophers? The answer to this question is affirmative. And the approach I propose for the study of Latin American philosophy, and for the study of the history of philosophy in Latin America, is what I have called elsewhere, *the framework approach*. I proceed to give a brief explanation of it next.27

**The Framework Approach**

The framework approach holds that in order to do history of philosophy it is necessary to begin by laying down a conceptual map of the issues in the history of philosophy that the historian proposes to investigate. This conceptual map is composed of five basic elements: first, the analysis and definitions of the main concepts involved in the issues under investigation; second, the precise formulation of those issues, together with a discussion of their interrelationships; third, the exposition of solutions that may be given to those issues; fourth, the presentation of basic arguments for and objections against those solutions; and, finally, the articulation of criteria to be used in the evaluation of the solutions to the problems under investigation and the arguments and objections brought to bear on them. In short, the framework is a set of carefully defined concepts, formulated problems, stated solutions, articulated arguments and objections, and adopted principles of evaluation, all of which are related to the issues the historian proposes to explore in the history of philosophy.

In the case, for example, of an investigation into the doctrine of categories of Aristotle, the conceptual map would consist in the following: (1) the definition and analysis of terms such as “category,” “categoricity,” “categorical,” “predicate,” “predication,” and so on, that is, terms that are commonly used, or that the historian thinks should be used, in the analysis of categories; (2) the formulation of problems related to categories (e.g., ontological status, interrelations); (3) the presentation of various types of theories of categories (e.g., conceptual, nominal, real, syntactic);28 (4) the investigation of arguments both for and against these theories (the need for brevity prevents me from giving examples); and (5) a set of criteria that will be used in the evaluation of theories of categories and of the arguments
that are used to support or undermine such theories. In (5) could be included general rules that have to do, for example, with coherence, although the most useful rules are specific ones, that is rules the historian thinks have to do particularly with the topic in question.

The function of the framework is to serve as a conceptual map for determining the location and relation of ideas and figures in the history of philosophy relative to each other and to us. It does not seek to eliminate the complexity of the issues, positions, or figures by arbitrarily simplifying them. Nor is the framework guided by the teleological aim of the eschatologist's historical schema, where philosophical developments are described, interpreted, and evaluated only to the extent they fit a developmental scheme leading to a prerecognized aim. Finally, the framework should not ignore or try to eliminate real differences among views, authors, and cultures as a doxography does. The function of the conceptual framework in the approach I am proposing here is rather to help establish the differences and similarities among ideas that otherwise would be very difficult to compare. It is not to confirm a predetermined historical direction or to blur existing distinctions. The conceptual framework makes possible the translation of diverse nomenclatures and traditions to a common denominator that will allow the development of an overall understanding. It reduces the cacophony of ideas to certain parameters according to which positions may be more easily understood, and it lays down the basis for possible evaluations and the determination of their development throughout history. In this sense, the approach satisfies the need for objectivity required by the accurate description of history and also provides the foundations for interpretation and evaluation that are essential to a philosophical approach to the history of philosophy.

An explicit framework makes clear, moreover, the way in which ideas and authors are being interpreted by the historian and the criteria according to which they are being judged. Most historians of philosophy consciously or unconsciously engage in surreptitious judgments that are passed on as part of historical description. Because a conceptual framework is always operational in any discourse, it is inevitable that its categories affect any account being proposed in that discourse. Anachronism cannot be completely eradicated from historical accounts, for historians are not tabulae rasaee, and they should not be. Moreover, the aim of a historical account is more than just the re-creation of the acts of understanding of philosophers from the past. Historians of philosophy go beyond those in order to make explicit the relations that could not have been made explicit in the past and to make judgments on the basis of evidence unavailable to the players in the historical drama. On the other hand, historical objectivity requires that interpretation and evaluation be clearly identified as such
and distinguished as much as possible from description. We need practical ways of recognizing what is or may be anachronistic, and a sure way to make headway in the preservation of objectivity is by making the conceptual map at work in the historian's mind as explicit and clear as possible. This obviously makes it easier to disagree with the resulting account. Clarity invites disagreement, whereas obscurity helps consensus. This is the reason why ambiguity is so useful in political and legal documents. Rhetoricians know this fact very well and put it to good practical use. But philosophy and history are by nature opposed to such gimmicks. If the aims pursued are truth and understanding, either in philosophy or in history, then clarity is essential and any hidden assumptions and presuppositions must be exposed. Obviously, it is not possible to lay bare every assumption one holds. But the attempt must be made to do so as far as possible. This is the reason why the attempt at uncovering the interpretative and evaluative conceptual map at work in historical accounts must be made at the outset.

Finally, another advantage of the framework approach should not be overlooked: It considers essential to the historical account the description, interpretation, and evaluation not only of positions, but also of problems and arguments. Some of the approaches described earlier were predisposed to concentrate on certain aspects of the past. The doxographical approach, for example, seemed to be concerned almost exclusively with positions to the neglect of arguments and problems. In the framework approach, the very procedure requires paying attention to, and taking into account, problems, positions, and arguments. The preparation of the conceptual framework used for the understanding of the past involves systematically distinguishing the various problems and issues that are pertinent, formulating different alternative solutions, examining the fundamental ideas involved in them, and analyzing the sorts of arguments used for and against the solutions in question. And all of this is accompanied by a statement of the criteria used for historical selection, interpretation, and evaluation as well as a clear indication of the historian's own views on the issues under discussion.

The features that have been pointed out allow the framework approach to capture and integrate the most beneficial aspects of other historiographical approaches. There is, however, a limiting aspect of the framework approach that should not be ignored. The framework approach works best when it deals with an idea or problem or a closely knit set of ideas or problems, rather than with the large-scale description of all philosophical dimensions of a historical period. The reason for this is that the development and exposition of a conceptual framework of the sort that this historiographical approach requires would not be feasible if such a
framework were to cover all aspects of the thought of a period. The framework approach, therefore, faces limitations when it comes to the production of comprehensive histories of philosophy. Such general works need to rely on more specialized studies that themselves use the framework approach, although they cannot themselves use it to the fullest. Considering the breadth that comprehensive histories must have, they must of necessity be doxographical. This is an important corollary, for it suggests that comprehensive histories of philosophy cannot be carried out with the method I am arguing best suits the history of philosophy. Therefore, either they must be done using less philosophically appropriate methods, or they must not be done at all. Some historiographers have argued that they must not be done at all.29 I believe there is some merit in them, however, provided they are themselves based on more probing analyses which use the framework approach and their aim is informational rather than philosophical. In this way, they are supported by conclusions reached through a sound methodology, and at the same time make modest claims about the data they present.

The advantages of the framework approach are not a consequence of the eclectic aggregation of the methodologies of other historiographical methods. It would be fruitless to try to put together the techniques used by a scholar and an ideologue and a doxographer, for example, for such a combination would be undesirable to the extent that its components have little to recommend for themselves. Finally, even if such a combination were desirable, the eclectic result would not necessarily constitute an effective method of procedure. To be so, it would have to come up with a concrete proposal for guidelines that the historian of philosophy should follow. And that can be accomplished only through the sensitivity developed in the awareness of the need to balance the descriptive, interpretative, and evaluative elements that enter into the historical account, not just by the eclectic aggregation of various procedures that by themselves have been found wanting.

There are at least two serious criticisms that can be brought to bear against the framework approach. The first is that it assumes too much.30 It can be argued that this approach assumes that it is possible to develop a general and neutral conceptual framework that can serve as the grounds for comparison among widely differing views. But this assumption is contradicted by our experience of the wide conceptual chasm that separates the present from the past and one culture from another. There is, therefore, no general framework that could be used to compare views from different periods of history. Moreover, the conceptual framework could not be neutral, because it would be the product of a historical figure in a particular culture. The notion of a general and neutral conceptual framework,
therefore, is nothing but a projection of a historian's desire for objectivity, and can never be realized.

In response, I would like to say that the endorsement of the framework approach and its implementation do not require the actual existence of a perfectly general and neutral conceptual framework. Indeed, part of the rationale for the framework approach is the awareness of the biased and culturally oriented perspective of every historian of philosophy. No historian is free from conceptual assumptions or looks at history from a completely neutral stance. This is why it is necessary to develop procedures that will promote, if not ensure, as much objectivity as possible. The function of the conceptual framework in the framework approach is to make explicit, as far as possible, both the historian's understanding of the issues, arguments, and views with which he or she is dealing and his or her own views about how those issues are to be understood, as well as the relative value of contending arguments and views with respect to them. The generality and neutrality of the conceptual framework are not conceived as something given and required at the beginning of the historical inquiry, but rather as a methodological goal that regulates the process whereby the historian tries to understand and recover the philosophical past.

The other serious criticism I would like to bring up is that the framework approach may become a kind of Procrustean bed in which ideas that do not fit are cut off and discarded, and others are stretched beyond what their proper elasticity allows. In short, the accusation is of having a preestablished scheme that the historian sets out to see substantiated in history, as did eschatologists such as Hegel and Augustine. 31

This is certainly a danger for the framework approach. But those who practice the approach need not fall into it. First of all, the framework must be broad and general enough to include as many alternatives as possible, and it should also be open to alteration. The framework is not a system, a complete and circular set of ideas, but rather an open-ended set of guidelines. There has to be a reciprocal relationship between the conceptual framework and the textual study. Developments in the textual study should prompt modification in the conceptual framework and developments in the conceptual framework should heighten the awareness about possible interpretations of the texts. Moreover, if the historical context is kept ever-present, the danger of extravagant interpretations and wild evaluations will be substantially reduced. Finally, the explicitness of the conceptual framework should help guard against the implicit and disguised interrelations and evaluations that are woven into most historical accounts.

In conclusion, then, I see the framework approach as the best way to study the history of philosophy in Latin America, including the history of Latin American philosophy. The synchronic and diachronic integration of
ideas that it makes possible cannot be found in any other approach and its eminently philosophical character serves to train students of philosophy in the discipline and to present Latin American philosophy in the philosophical light necessary for it to be regarded with respect and interest by philosophers everywhere. The benefits of the use of the framework approach, then, are twofold: First, it serves as a proper tool to teach the history of philosophy in Latin America insofar as, in this way, the study of the history of philosophy ceases to be an obstacle to philosophy and becomes a tool of it; second, its use in the study of the history of Latin American philosophy in particular should make possible the appreciation of the value of this history by making clear its philosophical contribution to the history of philosophy in general. This in turn should help draw the attention of philosophers, both inside and outside Latin America, toward this substantial body of work.

NOTES

1. None of the well-known histories of Western philosophy say much, if anything about Latin American philosophy. See, for example, the histories by Frederick Copleston, W. T. Jones, and Wilhelm Windelband.


3. One need only look at the materials published on Latin American philosophy to see that what is stressed is frequently what has to do with the particular identity that Latin American philosophy is supposed to have. Thus, whereas this topic is generally absent from discussions of other philosophies, it is a central topic of discussion when it comes to Latin American philosophy. The question of whether there is anything peculiar to Latin American philosophy is considered central to it. This perception is reinforced by the attitude of some Latin American philosophers themselves. See, for example, the works by Leopoldo Zea and Augusto Salazar Bondy mentioned later in this article.


6. Mario Bunge has stated: “I don’t know if there is philosophy in Argentina. I know there are people who study, serious people... [but] they are not original... it is still colonial philosophy.” “Testimonio de Mario Bunge,” in ¿Por qué se fueron? Testimonios de argentinos en el exterior, ed. Ana Barón, Mario del Carril, and Albino Gómez (Buenos Aires: EMECE, 1995), p. 60.
An early attempt in this direction is José Carlos Mariátegui's adaptation of Marxism to the Peruvian situation in his *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*.

This is the attitude revealed in the historical works of authors like Abelardo Villegas. See, for example, his *Panorama de la filosofía ibero-americana actual* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1963).


Indeed, among Hispanics/Latinos/Latin Americans, this is very strong. See Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) and Gracia and Iván Jáksic, eds., *Filosofía e identidad cultural en América Latina* (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1983). Keep in mind, however, that this interest is of the sort I mentioned earlier, often ideological and often purely historical.


The history of Latin American philosophical historiography is still to be written. A valuable step in this direction is Diego Pró's study of this topic in the Argentinean context: *Historia del pensamiento filosófico argentino* (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1973).

I discuss these historiographical approaches in more detail, but in a general context, in *Philosophy and Its History: Issues in Philosophical Historiography*, chapter 5.

The classic text which initiated this approach in Latin America is Ramos' *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* (Mexico: Imprenta Mundial, 1934). This was followed by *Hacia un nuevo humanismo* (Mexico: La Casa de España en México, 1940). The most representative work of Schwartzmann is *El sentimiento de lo humano en América*, 2 vols. (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1950 and 1953). Many historians and philosophers have followed in the footsteps of Ramos and Schartzmann. Among the most influential are Leopoldo Zea, Abelardo Villegas, Eduardo Nicol, Augusto Salazar Bondy, and Ricaurte Soler.

I have discussed the contribution of this and other so-called sociological approaches to the history of philosophy in Gracia, "Sociological Accounts and the History of Philosophy," in Martin Kusch, ed., *The Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), 193–211.


Ingenieros wrote two important historiographical works: *Direcciones filosóficas de la cultura argentina* (1915) and *Evolución de las ideas argentinas* (1918).


*Philosophy and Its History*, chapter 5, pp. 246–53.


23. Some good examples are works of Mauricio Beuchot and Fernando Salmerón. For Beuchot, see Estudios de historia y de filosofía en el México colonial (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1991), and for Salmerón, see Cuestiones educativas y páginas sobre México (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1980).

24. The work of Zea to which I referred earlier fits this approach.

25. Most of the work of José Vasconcelos falls within this category. See in particular, La raza cósmica (Barcelona: Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925), Indología (Paris: Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1926), and Historia del pensamiento filosófico (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1937).

26. Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg defends this historiographical approach in Hacia una metodología de la historia de las ideas (filosóficas) en América Latina (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1986).

27. What I say here has been taken, with appropriate modifications, from the more extended discussion in Philosophy and Its History (op. cit.), pp. 276–88.

28. I have discussed some of these in Gracia, Metaphysics and Its Task: The Search for the Categorial Foundation of Knowledge, chapter 9 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999).


31. This criticism is usually made by those who favor a scholarly approach. Kenneth Schmitz brings it up against my view in “La naturaleza actual de la filosofía se revela en su historia,” Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía 22, 1 (1996): 97 ff.