Philosophers and historians of philosophy are academically related in different ways. In the first place, they coexist in most departments of philosophy worth the name. Second, usually, philosophical curricula place philosophical courses such as Metaphysics and historical ones such as History of Modern Philosophy side by side. Third, lists of standing philosophers include both philosophers and historians of philosophy. And finally, even though it is generally acknowledged that as far as scholarship is concerned the training and the academic merits of philosophers and historians of philosophy is different, it is presupposed that the coexistence of philosophers and historians of philosophy mirrors a certain relationship between philosophy and its history. However, since there is no agreement on the precise nature of the relationship between them, the issue is left unresolved and pacific cohabitation is made a rule. These remarks describe with an acceptable degree of accuracy a status quo the Western philosophical world abides by. Yet, peace is difficult to keep. Decisions concerning hiring, curricula, research funds, congresses, and colloquia affect the status quo for they make it necessary to favor either philosophy or the history of philosophy; philosophers or historians of philosophy. Less frequently but more excitingly the status quo is disturbed when

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philosophers and historians of philosophy argue about the nature of the (putative?) relation between philosophy and its history; the relevance of (alleged?) historical knowledge to the practice of philosophy; the pertinence of certain (actual, possible?) historiographical practices and styles; and the (alleged?) philosophical character of the history of philosophy.

Since philosophical arguments have, unavoidably, a “local touch,” the way these issues are ranked, approached and discussed tends to differ from place to place. In the United States a discussion of philosophy and its history turns easily into a dispute concerning how strictly or how rightly analytical philosophers—a dominant majority in academia—tend to question the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy. In France or Germany—two countries with conspicuous historical traditions—a similar discussion may turn instead into a debate on the methodological and epistemological aims of historians of philosophy. In Great Britain the discussion may inspire a tough defense of the philosophical significance of the history of philosophy and a reproach to those philosophers—mostly analytic—who distort the past or deny its philosophical relevance.

Curiously enough, it is not easy to report an indigenous Latin American “local touch.” The reason is simple: there is no significant record of similar discussions among us. Four exceptions help to confirm the rule: Ferrater Mora (1978), Pereyra (1982), Gracia (1987), and Benitez et al. (1988). In fact, Latin American philosophers and historians of philosophy acquiesce to the standard status quo but give to it a peculiar turn: they tend to grant an uneven preeminence to the history of philosophy. Very often, philosophical subjects like metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics are conceived of and taught historically. Moreover, there is the conviction—inside and outside academia—that being a historian of philosophy is a way, perhaps even the way, of being a philosopher. But paradoxically enough, first-rate historical research is not as frequent as one might expect.

Is this an acceptable/desirable/commendable situation? Is it reasonable to stick to it just because it has been blessed by our academic tradition? Why not promote—or, at least, speculate on how to promote—an overt discussion on the relation between the history of philosophy and philosophy? Why not disturb, somehow, the Latin American philosophical academy?

A word of caution is in place here. Discussions on the relation between philosophy and its history may give rise to resentment, for they have an impact on established roles, power relations and self-images. They may become, indeed, intricate discussions. But they are worth having. In Latin America, the uncritical honoring of the status quo rules out the possibility that things might be otherwise. It is important, then, to question it, not for the sake of trouble, but as a healthy theoretical and practical endeavor. It is
true that roles, personal interests and self-images may be affected and that resentment may rise; but not necessarily and not crucially. The real issue is a philosophical and, no doubt, a very acute one. It involves taking a stand on the nature of philosophy, the way of doing it, the possibility of philosophical progress, and the import of philosophical claims. It also involves taking a stand on the knowledge claims of historians, the modalities of historical research, and the kinds of historiographical genders.

The outcome of the proposed discussion is uncertain. It might lead to the conclusion that it is hopeless to say something general and interesting about the relation between philosophy and its history, or that no general view on the issue deserves to enjoy wide acceptance, or even that philosophy and the history of philosophy are the same. Whatever the case, this topic deserves a place in the agenda of Latin American philosophers and historians of philosophy. In what follows, I spell out some theses and arguments that could set the stage for a discussion on the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy in the Latin America.

**HOW PHILOSOPHY BORE A HISTORY**

The actual state, mode of being or situation of any existent thing, natural or cultural, may be related to sequences of preceding events or processes. Consequently, there may be a narrative, actual or possible, to be told about that relation and those sequences. In these two basic senses, the Vesubio, you, the high seas, a molecule in my body, watercolor painting, and philosophy have a historical dimension. They may be placed in a diachronic sequence, and stories or narratives may tell when, how, and why the sequence took place. Nothing provoking about philosophy follows from the fact that it has a history of its own, in both trivial senses. To make the relation exciting we have to take an additional step, namely, to formulate a revealing interpretive frame, an attractive narrative, an intriguing way of picking up relevant facts and pertinent nexus. In other words, interesting questions about philosophy and its past arise when a principled way of attributing meaning/signification to a privileged set of past events or processes, is produced. This is not abstract talk. To a large extent, it describes what actually happened when philosophy bore a history two hundred years ago. Let me expand on this.

From Theophrastus and Diogenes Laercius (ca. third century A.C.) to Dietrich Brucker (seventeenth century), the connection between philosophy and its past was doxographically conceived. Doxographers produced lists of biographical accounts of “philosophers,” embellished with descriptions or summaries of what “they had said.” Chronology and context were underrated, and a recondite membership to sects or schools seemed to be
the only criterion to separate philosophers from nonphilosophers. Strictly speaking, doxography did not provide philosophy a revealing narrative, a proper history.

Things began to change in Germany, by the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth centuries. Dietrich Tiedemann's *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (1791–1797) and Gottfried Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1789–1819) set out a novel approach. They recorded biographies of philosophers and summarized their doctrines, but with some peculiar aims in mind: to describe the conceptual basis of the doctrines, to spell out the principled way in which they were produced, and, to a certain extent, to exhibit their connections to their cultural setting. More important, Tennemann surmised the bold hypothesis that the history of philosophy, as he recorded it, bore witness to the gradual work of the human spirit toward more enlightened states. The Historic Turn was in the making.

In many respects, Hegel's views (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1833–1836, 1840–1843) were a natural, though extreme, outcome of Tennemann's hypothesis. Hegel clearly saw that a factual description of the past would not support it; that a philosophical justification was needed. The time was ripe for a philosophy of the history of philosophy. Hegel's move was crucial. It meant that the philosophical past could only be interpreted from the standpoint of a philosophy of "the present" and that the history of philosophy was to be the record of valuable past developments. Consequently, it was to be envisaged as revealing the "passage to truth." In an important sense, then, "philosophy and the history of philosophy are the same." Although Hegel stressed the fact that philosophical systems grow out of a Volkgeist, his attention was centered on the process through which reason and its categories reaches, successively, a conceptual status. This is, in fact, the overarching process through which the Spirit unfolds itself. The unfolding is in agreement with a final system of philosophy, Hegel's, of course. As Geistesgeschichte, the history of philosophy is also the history of an autonomous discipline that has existed (so it is supposed) under different guises since the Greeks. However, Hegel did not advance his thesis in a technical vacuum. The parallel development of philological methods to reconstruct lost philosophical works and to relate works and authors (F. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1839) rounded off the picture.

Philosophy bore a history in Germany in the nineteenth century. The delivery was not simple. It involved a set of additional theses implying the following:

- there are criteria to identify classes of philosophical heroes, problems and systems, and to determine the kind of pertinent theoretical nexus that holds among them;
those criteria are produced aprioristically, insofar as philosophers deal paradigmatically with a conceptual, spiritual, and/or transcendental realm;

the history of philosophy has an immanent lineal continuity—no Kuhnian revolutions are possible;

the history of philosophy displays the efforts of the human mind to deal with and to answer to a set of recurrent problems;

truth is distributed, somehow, among philosophical systems, doctrines and theses—the criteria to determine how truth is distributed are provided, again, by a preferred aprioristic philosophical standpoint; and

singular studies on individual philosophers and/or philosophical systems or periods make sense only within such a holistic frame.

A peculiar preceptive resulted from the acceptance of these theses.

**Historiographical Genres**

The influence of the Historic Turn has been extraordinary. Its philosophical elan is present, in one way or other, in all the views supporting the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy. Besides, it has inspired a narrative that makes up Philosophy's Official Story. The accounts are not necessarily alike. Some focus on systems, others on problems, and yet others on great heroes. Some grant a special weight to contextual matters. Periodizations are not uniform. Yet, all agree on the possibility of ruling out, objectively, who is a real hero and who a lesser figure, what the cardinal problems of philosophy are, which doctrines or systems are important, and how they are related. Peruse standard texts, from Ueberweg's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* and Windelband's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, to Brehier's *La philosophie et son passé: Histoire de la Philosophie*, and Copleston's *A History of Philosophy*, among others, and you will see the workings of the preceptive at its best.6

Now, when stories become "official," the "scripts" are quickly promoted to the rank of faithful accounts of the given. The hypothetical constructions of the narrative are transformed into hard facts that are supposed to be found here and there, ready to be described and interpreted. Philosophy's Official Story is a large record of such alleged hard facts. Is it not apparent that Parmenides and Heraclitus's systems were intellectual reactions to each other? That Locke's philosophy begot Berkeley's and Berkeley's begot Hume's? That Kant's critical philosophy was a consequence of the dialectical *connubium* of Hume and Leibniz's philosophies? That Mill was a greater
philosopher than Hamilton, but not as great as Hegel; that Diderot and de Sade were not philosophers? The list of such “hard facts” that follow from philosophy’s “Official Story” may be extended indefinitely.7

Given this background, if we want to give a chance to an interesting discussion about philosophy and its history, it is important to leave aside the sacred character attributed to the plot and the alleged objectivity of the facts, events, and processes as described and interpreted by the Geisteshistoriker. I suggest two moves in this direction. First, a reminder to recall the high degree of positing and hypothesizing involved in the constructions inspired by the Geistesgeschichte tradition. Second, to realize that there are historiographical genres that offer alternative ways of viewing the relation between philosophy and its history. Consider a possible “Cultural History of Philosophy” exploring the “socio-historical affiliations of philosophers,” and elaborating “the history of philosophy ‘horizontally,’ with reference to its setting, and not ‘vertically,’ with reference to the philosopher’s predecessors” (Passmore, 1967). The consequences are amazing: chronological sequences have no importance, philosophical problems are contextualized, and the idea of an autonomous discipline called “philosophy” makes no interesting sense. Or take what Richard Rorty (1984) calls “Intellectual History,” namely, “descriptions of what the intellectuals were up to at a certain time, and their interactions with the rest of the world—descriptions which, for the most part, bracket the question of what activities which intellectuals were conducting.” To practice it, “one has to know a lot of social, political and economic history, as well as a lot of disciplinary history.” The consequences, again, are surprising: the distinction between “great dead philosophers” and “minor figures” turns out to be irrelevant. Clear-cut distinctions between philosophers and nonphilosophers, or philosophy and nonphilosophy, become obsolete. The autonomy of philosophy turns into an inane slogan because pace Rorty, the distinctions between “philosophy, literature, politics, religion and social sciences, are of less and less importance.” There is even an interesting point about precedence. To speak with Rorty, it might be argued that “intellectual history is the raw material for the historiography of philosophy … the ground out of which histories of philosophy grow.”

GLOBAL VERSUS SPECIAL HISTORIES

Imagine a Latin American colleague that has accepted for years, as a matter of fact, that the history of philosophy has a peculiar philosophical relevance. She is amazed, of course, at the prospect of discussing so obvious a topic. Nevertheless, she is prepared to take up the challenge. Just for a start, the first point I would like to make is that she has been taking for
granted, uncritically, the following:

- the validity of the Historical Turn and, consequently, some sort of Hegelian narrative;
- the kind of philosophical underpinnings that characterize Geistesgeschichte;
- philosophy's Official Story more Geistesgeschichte and its linear and global narrative; and
- the preeminence of Geistesgeschichte over alternative historiographical genres.

These are, indeed, rather heavy commitments. By pointing them out I would hope to show my colleague that no upholding of the status quo as “an obvious matter” or as “a matter of fact,” will do. But more important, pointing them out helps to make apparent that she has to face a difficult option. If by “history of philosophy,” what is meant is something akin to Geistesgeschichte, then she has to be prepared to argue, philosophically, for the Hegelian views that Geistesgeschichte involves. If, on the other hand, she grants the validity of alternative historiographical genres, the issue just vanishes: it turns, in fact, into a nonissue. It might be retorted that this is an unfair way of starting the discussion because it presupposes that upholders of the status quo have to support, by necessity, some sort of Hegelian view plus the philosophical project of concocting a lineal narrative from Thales to the present. And it might be argued that there is, in its stead, an alternative proposal, that one can be skeptical about the possibility of a global lineal narrative of the history of philosophy, and defend instead an alternative, non-Hegelian, view concerning the philosophical pertinence of the history of philosophy. Let us ponder this alternative.

Historians of philosophy are supposed to be trained as historians; but as historians of philosophy, they have to learn to disentangle philological and textual matters, identify contextual elements (literary, cultural), reconstruct and interpret conceptual frames and argumentative sequences, and distinguish and integrate different doctrines. They may choose to specialize in a particular period (say, Modern History), a hero (Kant), some of his works (Kritik der praktischen Vernunft) or some aspect of his doctrines (Kant’s Second Critique and the problem of transcendental arguments). Obviously, historians of philosophy have to master the basics of philosophy and the philosophical peculiarities of the specific topic they investigate.

Their task is, mostly, hermeneutical. The interpretations they produce of accorded texts are subjected, of course, to several restrictions. A basic one is what I will dub the “Skinner-Rorty constraint”:

No philosopher can eventually be said to have meant something which he could never be brought to accept as a correct description
of what he had meant in response to the criticisms or questions which would have been aimed at by his contemporaries or near-contemporaries whose criticisms he could have understood. (Rorty, 1987)³

Historians of philosophy who presuppose the constraint re-create or restore real or imaginary conversations of philosophers with themselves and with a host of interesting coetaneous interlocutors. In that way, they bestow meaning on texts and create interpretive significance.

Thanks to historians of philosophy, we count on a large set of established texts and a mass of hermeneutic proposals. The texts record past philosophical activity. The interpretations ponder what the texts might mean or how they are to be understood. Notice that, in this respect, there is nothing special about the history of philosophy vis-à-vis other "histories of." Notice, again, that a strong argument is needed to prove the philosophical pertinence of the history of philosophy to the actual practice of philosophy. It is necessary to show at least that knowledge of the philosophical past is essential for doing philosophy in the sense that ignoring the philosophical past and lacking that knowledge when doing philosophy implies one of the following. Either that we are not really doing philosophy but rather some spurious a-historical intellectual activity (strong version) or that we are not doing good, interesting philosophy (weaker version).⁴

Is there such an argument? Curiously enough, there are several of them. I do not intend a thorough review. A short list of some recurrent types will do. At this juncture, my main point is this: none of the standing arguments is a good one; none proves that knowledge of the philosophical past is indispensable to the practice of philosophy. Here is a list of some of the central claims:

1. Only attendance to past philosophical texts yields philosophical profits.
2. It is not possible to learn to philosophize from contemporary philosophy; one can only learn to philosophize by doing philosophy historically.
3. Historical consciousness contributes to significant philosophical achievement.
4. The philosophical past is constitutive of the philosophical present because the present is something toward which the past progresses.
5. In order to get an adequate understanding of philosophical problems it is essential to understand them genetically.
ANARCHONISTIC HISTORIANS OF PHILOSOPHY

Our Latin American colleague may try a different strategy. She may claim a special authority to produce proper interpretations of past texts, that is, allege a sort of corporate prerogative. Only historians of philosophy are able to produce proper readings of canonical texts. Other readings, particularly those made by philosophers interested in conversing with some past figure, are mockeries of adequate ones, for they are decontextualized, amateurish, distorted, and/or oversimplified. In fact, the very idea of making Aristotle, Aquinas, or Kant, for example, "conversational partners" who share our problems and technical lexicon, is either silly or tendentious. The past is a preserve of historians. They have the tools and the aptitude to unearth its secrets. Notice that the corporate claim plus the argument that one can only learn to philosophize by doing philosophy historically presupposes the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy. Very likely, this is the argument on which strong defenders of the status quo implicitly rely.

But why is philosophical partnership to be restricted to coetaneous persons? Why is conversation with past philosophers to be banished unless mediated by the hermeneutical efforts of historians of philosophy? Once a philosophical text gets set, thanks to historians of philosophy, what makes it improper to read it through "contemporary eyes" in order to identify and assess its merits or its failures? In short, why deny the legitimacy and philosophical import of an anachronistic, Whiggish, approach to the philosophical past?

Several points are in order here. First, to adopt an anachronic stance toward past philosophical texts does not imply free association from one's philosophical views. There has to be a constraint on possible "readings," parallel to the above-mentioned Skinner-Rorty constraint on the hermeneutical task of historians of philosophy. It might be expressed thus:

No philosopher can be said to have meant something that he or she could never be brought to accept as a possible description of what he or she, being acquainted with our technical standpoint, would say in response to all the criticisms and questions we would have raised.

Second, an anachronistic approach may take different guises. It may invite remakes of Geistesgeschichte or, more sensibly, it may promote general studies of a philosopher's doctrine or partial commentaries connecting current research with past proposals. Only the second and third ways are commendable: they are not committed to the fatuous project of concocting
a lineal development of philosophy through the ages from a "philosophy of
the present."

Third, an anachronistic approach to the philosophical past presupposes
that the actual state of the philosophical art is better, more correct, more
veritable than some past state(s), or, at least, that it is reasonable to envisage
ways of reaching such desirable state. One may choose this path for different
reasons: to identify and overcome past philosophical mistakes, to relate
actual practice with past proposals on similar topics, to get an adequate
training out of past instances of philosophical activity. Underlying these
reasons is the idea of philosophical progress. Notice, however, that it differs
from the idea of progress involved in Geistesgeschichte. It does not imply a
thesis about the gradual and lineal work of the human spirit toward more
enlightened states, or the thesis that there is an actual and final philosophi-
cal system abridging that process. It only implies the possibility of judging
from one's standpoint the mistakes and successes of (past) philosophers. In
this sense, it is congenial with the existence of Khunian revolutions in phi-
losophy; hence, with nonlineal progress in philosophy.

Fourth, taken to extremes, the corporate claim puts historians of phi-
losophy in a rather odd position: it equates them to antiquarians devoted
to the identification and restoration of old philosophical pieces. Their
interest in the past is self-centered. It disregards the actual practice and
development of philosophy, and denies the possibility of philosophical
progress. Paradoxically, it gives an excellent reason to doubt and question
the philosophical pertinence of the history of philosophy.

Denying philosophers their right to project their problems on some
established texts of past philosophers and to produce, when they think it
proper, a dialogic interchange with them seems absurd. In fact, it seems as
absurd as denying historians of philosophy their right to do their work
according to the canons of historical research. Notice that I am only
asserting that when a contemporary philosopher resorts to the texts of
past colleagues—a contingent decision, indeed—she is entitled to use an
anachronistic approach.

Our Latin American colleague may try a rejoinder. She may qualify
the corporate claim, legitimizing the anachronistic and the diachronistic
approaches, to suggest a sort of division of labor: let philosophers practice
anachronistic history when they like, and let historians of philosophy prac-
tice diachronistic history, as they have to. In short, let us reach a compro-
mise that will restore peace in academia.

This proposal is, in fact, a trite way of legitimizing the status quo.
Notice that the actual coexistence of philosophers and historians of philos-
ophy is based on the implicit commitment not to stir up the main undec-
cided issue: the alleged philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy.
The proposal hints at a compromise that pretends to give each part its due. However, it does not decide the issue but intends to validate the uneven space that the history of philosophy gets in Latin American academia. Curiously enough, we are back were we started.

THE PECULIARITY OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

But not quite so. Notice that, up to now, the argument about the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy was explained and assessed, mainly, in conceptual and methodological terms. The question was, given the status quo (Latin American version), is there a convincing argument on which the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy could be grounded? But now we can envisage an alternative question, namely, why has the history of philosophy such an appeal in our academic climate? In other words, why is being a historian of philosophy quite often, in Latin America, the appropriate way of being a philosopher? The ample space enjoyed by the history of philosophy is intimately related to the professional preeminence granted to historians of philosophy. Why is that so? I shall advance three hypotheses that suggest possible answers to these questions.

First, it may be pointed out that the role played in Latin American academia by the history of philosophy is related, somehow, to the peculiar status of philosophy. It is no secret that a liberal map of contemporary philosophy would spot several philosophical communities. Problems, standards of excellence, methodologies, and discursive styles are, mostly, internal to each community. Philosophy is not an established branch of knowledge. Now, as families claiming nobility need a family tree, an interesting genealogy, philosophy needs a history, a revealing genealogy, of its own. Historians of philosophy provide it. They produce the narratives that tell about eminent ancestors, intellectual achievements, deep puzzles and systematic proposals: intellectual heraldry, say. The sort of vicarious nobility borrowed from history is especially needed in Latin America, given the absence of established native philosophical traditions.

Second, if doing philosophy is not easy, doing philosophy and getting intellectual authority or prestige is not a common achievement. Being a historian of philosophy can be a way to gain authority and prestige without being exposed to the hazards of having to induce progress in the state of the art. I believe that in Latin America this is a main motivation to become a historian of philosophy. One selects a period in the history of philosophy, chooses some heroes, reads the main works, peruses bibliography, produces some exegetic commentaries (not necessarily critical) and gets, by proxy, part of the authority and prestige of the selected champions.
I am not saying that there is not a different, hard way of doing history of philosophy, nor that in Latin America there are not active historians of philosophy whose work satisfy the highest academic standards. I am saying that in Latin America the popularity enjoyed by the history of philosophy (including the teaching of philosophical disciplines in a historical way) is due, mainly, to a comfortable decision that takes advantage of the status quo and of one of its most revealing presuppositions: the assumed asymmetry between history of philosophy/historians of philosophy vis-à-vis other histories of/historians of.

It does not make sense to say that a history of chemistry is chemical or a history of geology is geological, and no one can claim to be a physician just because he or she is a historian of medicine or an artist just because he or she is a historian of art. But it is accepted that writing history of philosophy is engaging in a philosophical practice, and that being a historian of philosophy implies being a philosopher. In fact the best, simple, argument against this strange asymmetry comes from an outstanding historian of philosophy, Jacques Brunschwig. His thesis is that historians of philosophy are, first and foremost, historians and, as such, they do not philosophize. His point is that the hermeneutic métier of historians of philosophy does not raise the same type of questions that engage active philosophers because they do not have the same aims in mind. Brunschwig says:

The historian who writes a book on problem X as discussed by philosopher Y is interested, basically, in Y, and is interested in problem X in a secondary or derivative way, insofar as Y is interested in it; if that were not the case, he would be a philosopher, write a book on problem X, and mention Y’s ideas in the status questionis which would open the book... In a strict sense of the word, the historian of philosophy does not philosophize. (Aubenque and Brunschwig, 1992)

Historians of philosophy and philosophers have different vocations, are motivated by different questions, are involved in diverse intellectual activities, and practice two distinctive genres. Brunschwig concludes:

Historians of philosophy, as a species, are parasitic on that of philosophers... their texts are written on second degree, by reference to those [texts] written by philosophers whom they write about. But, as it happens, parasites are more helpful to others than to themselves. They may play a communicative role between the species that they parasitize and the rest of the world. (Aubenque and Brunschwig, 1992)
A third and final influential hypothesis on the theoretical stance of most Latin American philosophers is the idea that progress is at odds with philosophy. According to one version of this view, no actual philosophical perspective can show a past one to be obsolete, delusive, or false. A stronger version claims that it is impossible for a philosophical thesis to invalidate a past one. The conviction is apparent in the carefully nurtured ignorance of contemporary philosophical issues and theoretical proposals, evinced by most historians of philosophy. It is also apparent in the way in which they frame their critical comments and in the lack of criteria to assess the soundness, cogency, and epistemological value of past philosophical thesis vis-à-vis actual ones.

I leave the readers to make up their minds as to which hypothesis is most suitable to answer the question about the extraordinary appeal that the history of philosophy enjoys in the Latin American philosophical community. I would not be surprised if someone pointed out that the three of them combined provide the proper answer. After all, they are intimately related and, in a sense, support each other.

My imaginary discussion comes to an end. (Papers have to come to an end). But it was not unsuccessful, after all. First, it showed that a convincing argument in favor of the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy is still wanting. Second, it explained, somehow, the appeal of the history of philosophy in our academic tradition. But its real success, if it is to be successful, is still to be seen: to stimulate a real and serious philosophical discussion about the status quo.

**References**


**Notes**

1. The evidence for each of these items is strong. Cohabitation is also the rule. See, for instance, the graduate and Ph.D programs of most universities in Europe, the United States, Canada, and Latin America. See Schacht (1993), for a recent statement endorsed by the American Philosophical Association.

2. This is a cursory statement made on the basis of some standard bibliography: Aubenque and Brunchwig (1992); Gadamer (1981); Hare (1989); O'Hair (1996); Réé, Ayers, and Westoby (1978); Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner 1984, pp. 49–75.

3. Gracia (1992) has produced a carefully selected bibliography of almost four hundred entries. Only seven of them refer to Latin American and Spanish philosophers. On Ferrater Mora, see below note 7.

4. I am playing with the well-known ambiguity of the word *history*: it may be used to refer to a sequence of past events or to a systematic narrative of them.

5. Referring to the German beginnings of the history of philosophy, Gadamer (1981) reports: "Since Schleiermacher and Hegel it has been part of the tradition of German philosophy to view the history of philosophy as an essential part of philosophy itself... Before the Romantic period there was no such a thing as the history of philosophy in the sense we are concerned with here. There was only the sort of scholarship which compiles lists. (To be sure, the situation was different with the famous doxography which Aristotle, for pedagogical purposes, had included in his lectures—before such doxography became, in the ancient school, a scholarly work.)."

6. These works display a high degree of scholarship and are representative of different ways of approaching the subject. Ueberweg's is a monumental version of the Official Story.
Windelband's impersonates the neo-Kantian approach: the history of philosophy is a history of perennial philosophical problems that get diverse answers in different contextual conditions. Brehier's gives the Official Story a typical French touch. Copleston's is directed to a certain type of student, "the great majority of whom are making their first acquaintance with the history of philosophy and who are studying it concomitantly with systematic scholastic philosophy." Frankness as to the personal philosophical engagement is not common among historians of philosophy.

7. I am aping Ferrater Mora's lucid description of the way historians of philosophy tend to think that "philosophical systems beget others systems in an atmosphere as rarefied as sublime." Ferrater Mora is a sharp critic of the way historians of philosophy disregard political, religious, scientific, and social revolutions, when claiming to be mapping the course of philosophical ideas. See Ferrater Mora (1978).

8. What I call the "Skinner-Rorty constraint" is obviously a conflation of Skinner's constraint and Rorty's comments on it.

9. The distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions is useful here. At times, defenders of the philosophical relevance of the history of philosophy seem to endorse a weaker position: knowledge and practice of the history of philosophy is a sufficient condition to philosophize. My arguments are intended to cover both options.

10. These theses are picked out from some of the texts mentioned in note 2. Under the banner of "The Affirmative View," Gracia (1992) classifies the attempts to substantiate the thesis in favour of the philosophical pertinence of the history of philosophy. He speaks of rhetorical, pragmatic, and theoretical justifications. The rhetorical ones view the history of philosophy as providing inspiration and/or respectability; the pragmatic give practical reasons for the pertinence; the theoretical try "to find the theoretical bases for the use of the history of philosophy."

11. A two-tiered description is adequate for our purposes. However, a more detailed analysis has to allow for finer distinctions. See, in this respect, Wolf Lepenies's (1984) interesting analysis of Descartes, Hegel, Husserl, and Dilthey's views on the history of philosophy, and his proposal of a "new history of philosophy."

12. The view that standard, diachronic, history of philosophy and anachronic historiographic practice are both legitimate ways of doing history is supported by Richard Rorty (1984)—he calls them "historical" and "rational reconstructions," respectively. Margaret Wilson (1995) seems to support a similar view. She argues in favour of the seriousness of some of the contributions made by anachronistic historians (analytic ones, in the United States). Wilson points out that, "there is probably no general view about the relation of philosophy and historical study that presently enjoys wide acceptance—and none that deserves to." She argues for a sort of "pluralistic tolerance." It goes without saying that Rorty and Wilson have different aims in mind. Rorty rightly rejects what he calls "doxographic histories," namely, global histories from Thales to some contemporary figures, that "seem to decorticate the thinkers they discuss... [whose authors] know in advance what most of their chapters headings are going to be... [and] work... typically, with a canon which make sense in terms of nineteenth-century neo-Kantian notions of the 'central problems of philosophy.'" Doxographic histories presuppose that "philosophy" is the name of a natural kind: "a discipline which in all ages and places, has managed to dig down to the same deep fundamental questions." Rorty thinks that rational and historical reconstructions are as indispensable as Geistesgeschichte, "needed to justify our belief that we are better off than our ancestors by virtue of having become aware" of philosophical problems as historical
products. Intellectual history makes up the list of accepted genres. I have qualms about Rorty's ecumenical view. However, his excellent discussion has a normative role that fits well the North American academia. My discussion of genres is more adequate, I think, to the Latin American one. I leave the reader to spot the differences in my use of "doxography" and "Geistesgeschichte" vis-à-vis Rorty's.

13. The roles of history are poignantly displayed in Nietzsche's clever essay on the use and disadvantages of history for life (1874). Those in need of teachers, paradigmatic figures, and comfort—not found in their own times—have recourse to monumental history. Conformists and admirers of the past dig in it as antiquarians. Finally, people tortured by the present are in need of a critical history, a history that passes judgment on the past and deprecates it when necessary. In Latin America, the justificatory role played by the history of philosophy is a hybrid that lurks between antiquarian and monumental history.