INTRODUCTION

Does Latin America have a philosophy of its own? From the point of view of the often assumed universal character of philosophy, the question appears to be senseless. Not so to many, perhaps to most, Latin American philosophers. The question is raised, in a variety of ways, in several chronicles. The explanation easily comes to mind. It lies in the socio-economical and cultural history of the continent. For hundreds of years the Latin American countries were victims of European colonialism. The European powers, Portugal and Spain in particular, not only dominated their socio-economic life, their political system and to some extent also their cultural expressions. The Europeans also imposed upon them their languages and their religious beliefs. From the middle of the 16th century, Christian philosophy dominated the scene.

No wonder then, that in the wake of colonialism questions of the development of an independent economy, a just political system, the relief from poverty and of a specific Latin American cultural identity were raised. These questions also go to philosophy inasmuch as philosophical reflection is part and parcel of most cultures.

An overview of some of the position is given by *Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez* in his chronicle *La Philosophie contemporaine en Amérique latine*. Under the heading *method* he outlines three main answers:

- Latin American philosophy has no originality. This is simply a consequence of the mentality of the colonial powers. European schools of thought determine all our philosophical thoughts.

The other extreme,

- Although there may be no genuine Latin American philosophy at present, it is perfectly possible to work it out. The two world wars clearly show the decadence of Europe and of its capitalist economic system. European philosophy is therefore suffering a crisis (a thought that may have been inspired by Husserl's work on *The Crisis* and more recently by the American moral and social philosophers Alastair McIntyre and Ricardo Sennet). Philosophy has become a discipline on its own, disconnected from the socio-economic and cultural processes (R. Gomes). We are, on the contrary, as held by Palacios and others, the native people with immense possibilities and vast horizons before us. The mixture of the races has given us a new soul. Within our frontiers "humanity is emerging". And a genuine philosophy should incorporate the native culture.

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Some think it possible to work out a genuine Latin American philosophy following the philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger. It would help people in this part of the world to discuss their "original Being" (E. Mayz Vallenilla). Others interpret the original Being in terms of the old myths. Philosophers should therefore take into account the French ethnologist J. Lafarge. It is the myths that may provide the Latin American people with their cultural identity. Philosophy of the myths is also central to the work of V. F. da Silva. However, there cannot be any genuine Latin American philosophy, Enrique Dussel holds, without a philosophy of liberation of the oppressed. He envisages such a philosophy inspired by the philosophies of Hegel, Marx, Husserl, and Heidegger.

In view of these positions, no wonder that some hold that an autonomous philosophy emerges as a union of European meditation and a philosophy of the native inhabitants of the country.

- This view is close to the *third* position, a *relativistic* view on the possibility of a genuine Latin American philosophy. No philosophy in these countries can avoid the influence of European philosophy. Their ordinary language, as well as their philosophical vocabulary, bears the imprint of the Europeans. Also their methods of investigation demonstrate all along European influence. Christian philosophy, French positivism, German philosophy of history, and phenomenology have all left their imprint. The broad influence of Anglo-American analytical philosophy is clearly shown in the chronicle by Fernando Salmerón.

The relativistic view on Latin American philosophy is nicely formulated by Miró Quesada (Peru). It is perfectly possible, he holds, to formulate a Latin American philosophy which speaks with two voices, one which takes as a starting point the contribution by Latin American philosophers to universal problems of philosophy, and the other, which discusses problems of the Latin American man in the light of the universal philosophical problems.

As is evident from the present collection of chronicles both positions have a number of adherents.

Philosophy and History

The various philosophical positions all have a history. The history of Latin American philosophy, as is apparent, cannot be properly conceived without taking into account Latin American history, the colonial, the pre-colonial and the post-colonial history. Quite a few chronicles have such references as a basis for their presentation of philosophical problems. The philosophy of myths as part of a Latin American ethno-philosophy, has some of its roots in the pre-colonial shamanism. The introduction of Christianity by missionaries

alongside the European intruders from 1492 and especially in the 16th century, initiated a Christian philosophy. A Dominican school of philosophy was founded already in 1538 (in Santo Domingo) and became a university discipline at the first universities founded in Mexico and Lima in 1553. Scholasticism now and then supported by a revival of Thomism inspired by the universities of Louvain and Freiburg, has been a strong tenet of Latin American philosophy ever since.

Colonialism lead to the extinction and suppression of large ethnic groups, economic exploitation and poverty, which prepared the ground for the emergence of radical and conservative political movements and parties. Marxism played a significant role in Latin America in the 19th and 20th century, and served as a basis for a number of revolutions (f. inst. Cuba 1959). The philosophy and pedagogical theories of liberation, especially in the 20th century, is intimately related to the historical situation. The destruction of the rainforests inspired ecological movements as well as eco-philosophy and ethics, especially outside Latin America.

The influence from European and American philosophy often lifted, as it were, the Latin American philosophy out of their historical context and made philosophy "universal". A number of Latin American philosophers have given important contributions to a more general philosophy.

> They (the philosophers) "lived in a non-European world, but they reflected out of a philosophy for which reality was what was European". That made their philosophical reflection ambiguous. They lacked "a focus". (Miró Quesada)

To this stage belongs an anti-positivist reaction inspired by Henry Bergson and an anti-rationalist movement inspired by Schopenhauer and Pascal, Philosophy of history inspired by José Ortega y Gasset, and most universities also scholastic philosophy. They all lacked an overall purpose.

Enrique Dussel gives a broad presentation of the development of Latin American philosophy in the 20th century. He distinguishes between three stages. The *first* stage was dominated by the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte and later on of Herbert Spencer and Ernst Haeckel. Given that Comte in his positive philosophy envisages a positive development of the French and the other European societies and of politics as the new "exact science", it is hard to see the relevance of this mode of thinking in Latin America. *Secondly*, as Miró Quesada comments, the nest generation (in the middle of the 20th century) broadened the scope of philosophical approaches, partly due to new impulses from European philosophy, partly to a growing awareness of the dominion by foreigners. Husserl's "phenomenological idealism" and Heidegger's "existential metaphysics" (Carlos Astrada) came into focus.

Husserl together with Scheler and Hartman promoted studies in ontology, epistemology and axiology in several Latin American countries. Francisco Romero, inspired by these philosophies in addition to Mounier's personalism, launched a collection of Latin American thought. It was part of a project of developing "a rigorous philosophy". Husserl also inspired a number of philosophers to reflect on the character or Latin American history as a contribution to its genuine identity. However, some philosophers (Carlos Astrada) thought that Husserl remains imprisoned within the horizon of the objects of consciousness. Heidegger's ontology on the other hand, gave priority "to the being in the historical world". And the world is our world, that is, the world of the Latin American people.

Thirdly, especially after World War II, the influence of analytical philosophy was growing. Some defended the logical empiricism of Vienna. It was regarded, according to Fernando Salmerón, as a renaissance of the antipositivist polemic. The focus shifted, however, soon to Cambridge and England in the 1960s, to Russell, Wittgenstein, Ross, Moore, and others. The first generation of philosophers of law appeared. The most prominent among them was Carlos Alchourrón and Eugenio Bulygin, both of them with an analytical bent. Analytical philosophy became a test, as it were, for checking the logical validity of reasoning in most disciplines, and for developing a "rigorous philosophy". Miró Quesada and Mario Bunge are well-known names.

The philosophy of liberation

"I have to dismantle their machinery of oppression. And philosophy has to be in this struggle." This statement from Salazar Bondy may be said to introduce the philosophy of liberation in an important part of the third generation. Liberation appears to have a twofold meaning: the colonial powers should be removed and people on the Latin American continent should be relieved from their poverty and suppression, *and*: the "dignity of the cultural alterity" of the Latin American people should be affirmed and developed. The cultural alterity should be the basis in the development of a Latin American cultural identity.

For this purpose the philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger were most useful in that it strengthened the historical awareness of the Latin American people. What was needed was a dialectical revolutionary understanding of history. Hegel and Marx came into focus. And philosophy became powerful: it inspired revolutionary movements in several Latin American countries. The Cuban revolution of 1959 is still lasting. The philosophical impact of these revolutionary movements was widespread (in accordance with the dialectical principle).

Some philosophers took a somewhat milder approach. Paulo Freire strongly believed in the education of people and developed his pedagogy of liberation. It certainly exercised an important influence, also outside Latin America.

The codex of the liberation movement was published in Cordoba in the years 1970-75 in five volumes, *Towards an Ethics of Latin American Liberation.* It is still worth reading.

The liberation of women is an issue in philosophy as well. The topic is barely mentioned in the present chronicles. Those who want a name may go to the work of one of the Latin American feminists, Graciela Hierro. Further references to feminist philosophy are given in the contribution by *Sara A. Jafella* and by *Daniel Herrera Restrepo.*

Both have chosen an historical approach in their contributions. Jafella lists the most important topics and philosophers in Argentinean universities, some of whom have been mentioned above. She stresses the importance of the influence from Spanish philosophers and the tension present in several Latin American philosophers between modernity and postmodernity. Philosophy of law and a dialectical philosophy of liberation are key issues.

Mario Bunge is a most original philosopher who has settled in Canada. His great system of philosophy in eight volumes shows how most of the central topics and disciplines in philosophy may be integrated in one coherent system (see below).

Philosophy is both a theoretical and practical discipline. In Colombia, according to Daniel Herrera Restrepo, after the independence in 1819, Bentham's utilitarianism demonstrated its practical power. His thought inspired both the legal organization of the new state and the program of the Liberal Party (which came to power in 1930). Philosophy, together with the processes of industrialization and socialist movement increased the awareness of the need for education and cultural support. Thus philosophy contributed to the secularization of the traditional theocratic society. The fall of the dictatorship (in 1957) appears to have released the enormous potential for philosophy. Numerous centers and institutions were erected.

A main theme in Colombia is the emancipation of man as f. inst. in Guillermo Hayas Vasques. It is a question of the meaning of man's action, of science, of history, and of political action. Sources of inspiration were both Husserl, Kant's thoughts on liberty, and the Neo-Marxism of Habermas. This questioning leads to the phenomenological project of an ontology of "the world life".

According to another prominent philosopher, Luis Enardo Nieto Arteta, life is dialectic. It reveals itself as the unity of opposites – between liberty and necessity, between rationality and irrationality, between objectivity and



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