

reviewers. If there are philosophers who would like to review any or several of the books on the list, the editor will procure them for the prospective reviewer.

Finally, the editor of the newsletter would like to refer readers to Vol 27, No. 2 of *Philosophy and Social Criticism* which contains the articles of the symposium held on Jorge Gracia's book *Latino/Hispanic Identity* at the 1999 annual meeting of the Eastern Division of the APA. There readers will find articles by Gregory Pappas, Robert Gooding-Williams, Eduardo Mendieta, Richard Bernstein, Jorge Garcia, and a response by Jorge Gracia. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* will also publish the papers presented at the symposium on Jorge Valadez's book *Deliberative Democracy, Political Legitimacy, and Self-Determination in Multicultural Societies* (Bolder, Westview: 2000). This special issue will include articles by Martha Nussbaum, James Bohman, Eduardo Mendieta, and a response by Jorge Valadez.

Errata: in the last issue of the newsletter, the editor failed to note that the translation of Reyes Mate's articles appeared with permission from Duke University and the journal *Nepantla: Views from the South*, where the articles will appear in a slightly different version.

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ARTICLES

Why I am Not Hispanic: An Argument with Jorge Gracia

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"[T]he search for a name, more than an act of classification, is actually a process of historical imagination and a struggle over social meaning at diverse levels of interpretation."

Juan Flores, "The Latino Imaginary"

In declaring that I am not Hispanic, I mean to be intentionally provocative. Moreover, I do so with the full knowledge that I run the serious risk of having the philosopher Jorge Gracia task me with being an ignorant and prejudicial purveyor of misinformation about my cultural and historical background.¹ I run this risk not because Gracia is an unfriendly person, but because, according to the definition of the term that Gracia proposes in his recent book *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective*, I am Hispanic; I fit easily into the group of people that he designates as Hispanic. According to Gracia, Hispanics are the "group of people comprised by the inhabitants of the countries of the Iberian peninsula after 1492 and what were to become the colonies of those countries after the encounter between Iberia and America took place, and by descendants of these people who live in other countries (e.g. the United States) but preserve some link to those people." He goes on to note that his definition "excludes the population of the other countries in the world and the inhabitants of Iberia and Latin America before 1492 because, beginning in the year of the encounter, the Iberian countries and their colonies in America developed a web of historical connections which continues to this day and which separates these people from others" (48-49). Why, if I am willing to admit that I fit into Gracia's definition, am I yet unwilling to claim the identity *Hispanic*? Am I simply being perverse?

Elsewhere, I have demonstrated that how a person identifies herself has profound consequences for how she understands the world, and consequently, for how she chooses to act within it.² Claiming or affirming an identity, under this view, is more than a simple act of self-determination—although it is that, too. Fundamentally, it is a struggle over social and historical meaning. Moreover, because identity labels are tags for conceptual categories, they are epistemically and politically significant in ways that Gracia clearly acknowledges in his introduction but fails to fully register in his argument in favor of Hispanic identity. In what follows, I discuss some of the particular issues that arise in a consideration of the term *Hispanic* ethnicity vs. (its primary rival) *Latina/o*. I hope to build on, even as I disagree with, aspects of Gracia's important work. Without doubt, his book represents the most sustained philosophical discussion of the topic yet written. Moreover, his is the most erudite and convincing argument in favor of the term *Hispanic* I have yet to see. As such, it is well worth the

engagement of scholars who care about the issues he addresses.

The key to understanding my objection to Gracia's argument has less to do with what I think is the "best" name for the group of people Gracia delineates, and more to do with the constitution of the group, as an identity group, in the first place. Gracia's concept of Hispanic is not, properly speaking, an identity category. Identity categories, ethnic and otherwise, serve a particular social function—they help us to locate individuals (more and less accurately) in relation to social groups. As such, an identity category is most meaningful when it provides some substantive hints about the person who is designated as a member of that group. The concept of Hispanic ethnicity as Gracia defines it, however, is so capacious as to be contentless at a number of different levels. It provides no substantive hints regarding a person's possible place of birth, nationality, economic or social status, sexuality, language, religion, political perspective, or even what century he or she belongs to. I am willing to grant that Gracia's concept of Hispanic may be useful for some purposes—including as a category for denoting a particular body of philosophical work. (I will return to this point at the end of the essay.) But I contend that when it is conceived of as an identity category, it obscures more than it illuminates about the people it purports to describe.

In presenting his case, Gracia argues that the "concept of Hispanic should be understood historically, that is, as a concept that involves historical relations" (48). By arguing his case in historical terms, Gracia moves to elude two potential theoretical traps. First, he avoids charges of biological essentialism. More crucially, though, he is able to disregard the objections of those who would deny the *Hispanic* label for themselves. This is because, in privileging historical relations, Gracia downplays the experiential and subjective components of ethnic group identification. He explains: "It is not even necessary that the members of the group name themselves in any particular way or have a consciousness of their identity... What ties them together, and separates them from others, is history and the particular events of that history rather than the consciousness of that history: a unique web of changing historical relations supplies their unity" (49). It is Gracia's dismissal of the subjective component of ethnic group identification that marks the first difficulty with his conception of ethnic identity. Ethnic consciousness, even when it expresses itself as disidentification, is a constitutive aspect of ethnic identity. Richard Rodriguez in *Hunger for Memory* might have wanted to disavow the social significance of his Mexican heritage, but he was certainly aware of that heritage! Moreover, without presupposing some level of consciousness in ethnic group identification, the historical criteria that Gracia offers for delineating ethnic groups does not survive close scrutiny. Let me explain.

If we are going to reach back through 500+ years of history, with the only criteria being a historical one, there is little reason to suppose that I, for example, should privilege my Spanish ancestors rather than my Anglo ones. Why, since I have Cunninghams and Blacks in my genealogy, don't I identify as Anglo? On what basis can I claim more affinity with the Bacas, the Martinezes and the Moyas in my particular family history? How, unless I know what I am looking for,

am I to determine which branch to follow up my historical family tree? The objection here is basically the same objection that the philosopher Anthony Appiah levels against W.E.B. DuBois in his critique of DuBois's sociohistorical argument for the existence of races. Why, Appiah asks, "as the descendant of Dutch ancestors" doesn't DuBois's "relation to the history of Holland in the fourteenth century (which he shares with all people of Dutch descent) make him a member of the Teutonic race?" (27). Appiah rightly points out that "sharing a common group history cannot be a criterion for being members of the same group, for we would have to be able to identify the group in order to identify *its* history" (27). My point is that Gracia, too, presupposes the existence of the group he wants to name before choosing, as the necessary and sufficient condition for membership in that group, a particular relation to the one historical event—the 1492 encounter—that can encompass all the people he wants it to include and can support the identity label he prefers.³

I should emphasize that I have no interest in drawing Appiah's conclusion that races or ethnic groups do not exist as such. Appiah, like Gracia, errs by not taking account of the experiential component of ethnic or racial group identification.⁴ Both philosophers seriously underestimate the degree to which humans' day-to-day experiences of the social world influence ethnic and racial group identification. This causes them to underrate the significance for identity of one of the most crucial determinants of day-to-day experience—that is, physical appearance. In his critique of DuBois, Appiah dismisses the significance of the "visible morphological characteristics of skin, hair, and bone, by which we are inclined to assign people to the broadest racial categories" (21). Skin color, hair texture, and bone structure never even come up for serious discussion in Gracia's book on Hispanic/Latino identity. And yet, the particular visible morphological characteristics we carry around on our bodies have a great deal to do with how we are treated, how we see and evaluate others, how we come to interpret the social world, and, ultimately, whom we identify with. Skin color, hair texture, and bone structure have no inherent biological or social meaning, but they do have historically constructed and highly sedimented social meanings that affect—in ways that can be described—how people sort themselves and others into racial and ethnic categories.⁵ I can imagine a future in which our physical characteristics will be irrelevant for how we identify. That future, however, is not yet here, and as long as skin color, for instance, can make such a difference in how a person experiences the world, theorists of identity cannot afford to ignore it as a factor in ethnic (or racial) group categorization.⁶

Taking experience seriously while theorizing identity poses a challenge to Gracia's historically constituted concept of Hispanic. It raises the possibility that we might want to "carve out the world" into conceptual categories different from the ones he proposes (39). For example, Gracia claims that although he and the 15th century King John II of Portugal have "nothing in common," they are nonetheless "tied by a series of events" through which they are related to each other and separated from Queen Elizabeth II and Martin Luther King Jr. (50). This may be true, but it begs the question of how significant such a relation might be for deciding one's social identity. Part of what is at stake in claiming or assigning

an identity is determining which historical events or personal experiences are significant enough to affect one's conceptual organization of the world. What if I were to say that what happened to a few of my ancestors 500+ years ago is less important for how I experience the world, and consequently for how I understand my ethnic identity, than the war of aggression waged by the United States against Mexico in 1846-48? Or, what if I were to give more weight to the legacy of political disenfranchisement suffered by racial minorities in this country, or to my own experiences of racism, as a way of deciding whom I am most closely related to? If I were to do that, then I might consider myself far more closely "tied by a series of events" to Martin Luther King Jr. than to King John II of Portugal. This possibility would be even more likely if I were a dark-skinned Dominican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban man living in Alabama in the 1960s. In that case, I would still fit Gracia's definition of a Hispanic, and yet the likelihood that I might recognize a relation to Martin Luther King Jr. would be far greater than that I might recognize a relation to King John II of Portugal. Indeed, most groups (other than that of "human being") that both I and King John II of Portugal might be said to belong to would likely be a group that would have very little meaning for my day-to-day experiences of the world—and consequently, for how I conceptually "carve out the world."

Despite my criticisms of Gracia's conception of Hispanic identity, I agree with crucial aspects of his argument and methodology. For example, I agree with Gracia's suggestion that we should see ethnic groups, and other kinds of social groupings, in terms of the Wittgensteinian notion of family resemblance (48-50).⁷ I concur that there is an identity group that we can designate as *Hispanic* or *Latina/o*, although I see it as being constituted differently from the one he proposes. Moreover, I agree with Gracia that identities can be thought of as "windows to reality" (51).⁸ Like other kinds of concepts, Gracia notes, identities "carve out the world," and help determine "the ways we think about things and the properties we attribute to them" (39). It is precisely because Gracia is right about this last point that theorists of identity must be attentive to the kind of world particular identities—including the one Gracia champions—make visible.

One way to evaluate Gracia's conception of Hispanic identity is to look at the particular historical narrative on which it is premised. Historical narratives, like all narratives, involve principles of selection and exclusion and employ explanatory metaphors; Gracia's is no exception. For example, Gracia says he wants to think of Hispanics in terms of Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance. Insofar as Gracia uses Wittgenstein's notion to talk about how a social group can be composed of heterogeneous members that have no common elements considered as a whole, I have no disagreement. But what happens in Gracia's account is that there is a slippage from the idea of family resemblance to the metaphor of marital attachment. According to Gracia, the "very foundation of a family" is a marriage which "takes place between people who are added to a family through contract, not genesis."⁹ After asserting that "families are formed by marriages," Gracia goes on to liken the 1492 encounter to the coming together of a family that occurs as a result of a marriage. He writes: "Is there a point in history where our Hispanic family came to be? Since our community

includes not only the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula, but also those of the part of America appropriated by Iberian countries, we must find a point in history when we came together, and this, I propose, is the encounter of Iberia and America" (50). I want to linger for a moment on Gracia's choice of marriage as a metaphor for the cataclysmic and world-shattering event we now refer to as the "encounter." I would like to point out that while there were undoubtedly a few marriages that took place between Spaniards and Indians, the conquest of America can more accurately be described as a project of rape, pillage, and exploitation (carried out, of course, under the banner of religious conversion) than as a joyful wedding or a tableau of family unity. I am not accusing Gracia of being unaware of the facts involved in the conquest, but I am suggesting that his metaphor of a marriage to describe the encounter is fundamentally misleading and occasions him to smooth over the rancor and enmity, not to mention social inequalities, that still exist as a result of that long-ago event. All I can say to Gracia is this: If that was a marriage, I want a divorce!

So, if I am not Hispanic, what ethnicity am I? This is a complicated question, and one that can be answered in a variety of ways. In some contexts I would describe myself as Mexican American, in others as Chicana, and in still others as Latina.¹⁰ I use the term Mexican American, usually with people who are not Mexican American, as a way of helping them to locate me. The term, for me, is a descriptor that indicates that I am a U.S. citizen and that my cultural heritage is Mexican. If the person to whom I am speaking knows very much about the community of Mexicans in this country, they might be able to envision what foods I likely grew up with, what music I might have listened to as a child, what religion I was probably baptized into, and what languages I might have some familiarity with. Despite the fact that not all Mexican Americans will share all aspects of this cultural identity, enough of us share enough of these aspects so that the people who can be so described constitute a fairly organic grouping. The cultural attributes that are generally associated with the concept of Mexican American provide a backdrop against which we can explore our individual differences. This is in contrast to Gracia's concept of Hispanic, which is so expansive as to basically tell us nothing substantive about the person who is described by that term.

I use the term *Chicana* when I want to signal a particular kind of affiliation with other Mexican Americans who share an identifiable (although internally heterogeneous) perspective on the world. In some ways, the term *Chicana/o* does the work of the term *Mexican American* plus a little bit more. A *Chicana/o* identity is a politicized identity, and one that many Mexican Americans do not claim. The fact that not all Mexican Americans claim it is perfectly fine with me. There are many Mexican Americans whose views about assimilation, for example, I do not share, and the use of the term *Chicana/o* is a convenient way to signal that.

Finally, I use the term *Latina* when I want to signal an experiential, and to a lesser degree political and cultural, affiliation with a larger group of people living in the U.S. who themselves or whose ancestors have come to this country from Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, El Salvador, etc. It refers to basically the same group of people that Gracia designates with the term *Hispanic* with a crucial difference. When I refer to

Latina/os, I am *not* referring to people living in Latin America or Spain. This is not because I am a nationalist, or because I am biased against Latin Americans or Spaniards. Moreover, I acknowledge the important connections (economic, political, intellectual, familial, and cultural) that exist between Latina/os in the United States and Latin Americans and residents of the Iberian peninsula. But I believe that when it comes to assigning and describing social identities—especially when they are invoked for political or epistemic purposes—it is important to recognize the specificity of geopolitical space, and the experiential significance of being a ethnic minority citizen or resident of a country like the United States. I am in no way suggesting that being Latina/o is inherently better or worse than being Latin American or Spanish. I am, however, suggesting that it is different enough to be worth marking. Let me illustrate my point.

When I was a graduate student at Cornell University during the early 1990s, the term *Hispanic* was used by the then-director of the Hispanic American Studies Program (HASP) to mean essentially what Gracia proposes it should mean. The practical effect of this was that for years no rigorous academic courses about the histories and literatures of U.S. Latina/os were offered through that program. Because most of the faculty associated with HASP during that time were experts in the literatures or histories of Latin America or Spain—or they were themselves from Latin America or Spain—they had little knowledge of or interest in the histories, experiences, and perspectives of Latina/os living in the U.S. The faculty taught courses in their own areas of expertise, and blithely assumed that because they were teaching courses about Hispanics (broadly defined), they were adequately fulfilling their educational mission. This situation persisted despite the fact that HASP had been established in 1987 with the explicit purpose of providing an institution through which the lives and cultural productions of Latina/os living in the U.S. could be studied.¹¹ When Latina/o students asked for, and then agitated for, courses focused on U.S. Latina/os, the response of most of the faculty affiliated with the program was to accuse students of being “divisive,” and of undermining the “unity” of the Hispanic population at Cornell. Students interested in pursuing the study of Latina/os in the U.S. were further charged with being “exclusionary” and having “too narrow” a focus. It took a four-day occupation of the administration building in 1993 and several years of ongoing activism to wake up both the faculty and the administration to the fact that there were serious deficits in the curricular offerings of HASP, as well as in the range of services available to Latina/o students at Cornell.¹² What became clear during the course of that struggle was that a conceptually very large category of identity—like the category Gracia proposes—can serve in pernicious ways to displace or erase the concerns, interests, and perspectives of the less powerful members of the group while unfairly privileging the concerns, interests, and perspectives of the more powerful members. What also became clear was that the concerns, interests, and perspectives of such a large group of people were extremely diverse and could not be reconciled by invoking a common identity. I do not believe that, by formulating the concept of Hispanic in such an expansive way, Gracia intends to do the least bit of harm to U.S. Latina/os. Nevertheless, I am mindful of the ideological work that categories and concepts can do independently of human intention.

There is one final question that I need to address: I have not yet given a reason why we should call this (further delimited) group of people Latina/os rather than Hispanics. The first issue that arises is that of self-determination. Certainly, many of the people I refer to as Latina/os call themselves Hispanics. And, in general, I believe that others should have the same measure of self-determination that I want for myself. But for the sake of deciding which label I want to identify *myself* with, I am cognizant of who tends to use which term, in what contexts it is generally invoked, and for what purposes it usually employed. Although in the context of the present-day United States the referent of the two terms is roughly the same, the way in which they are used and the persons who tend to use them differ significantly enough so that, as Linda Martín Alcoff has pointed out in an essay on this topic, “the use of one rather than the other of these terms can signal one’s political views about assimilation, cultural nationalism, and the relative importance of race” (1). It has been my experience that, with some exceptions, most of the scholars and public figures in this country who prefer the term *Hispanic* tend to espouse political positions and social values that I strongly disagree with. One such person is the recently-dumped Bush nominee for Secretary of Labor, Linda Chavez.¹³

The second issue that arises is whether one term is semantically preferable to the other. Gracia’s most powerful argument in favor of the term *Hispanic* is that it “works by helping us understand the bases for the identity of our ethnic family” (67). He further argues that, when the term *Hispanic* is “rightly understood,” it connotes diversity and *mestizaje* rather than “racial purity.” Because pre-conquest Spain was a racially diverse place, he explains, those ethnocentric and racist people in the southwest who appropriated the term in order to distance themselves from *mestizos* and Mexican Americans are simply wrong-headed (61-66). But if, as I have argued, the people Gracia identifies as Hispanics do not share a social identity—ethnic or otherwise—then Gracia’s argument that *Hispanic* is the most appropriate term loses force. Moreover, the undeniable fact that the Iberian peninsula is and has been a racially diverse place has little bearing on the meaning of the term within the context of its use in the United States. It is precisely *because* racists in the southwest (and elsewhere) have long exploited the ideology of *hispanidad* in order to distance themselves from their darker-skinned brethren that the term *Hispanic* carries connotations of racial purity in the U.S. context. The fact that they are wrong-headed does not change the contextually-determined meaning of the term.

My preference for the *Latina/o* label is similarly influenced by the contexts in which I see it used and by the persons I know who invoke it. The Cuban American, Dominican American, mainland Puerto Rican, and Chicana/o students I knew while at Cornell used the term *Latina/o* to describe the various collectivities they formed when they came together as political or social entities. Many writers and scholars whose work I admire, such as Alcoff, Ofelia Schutte, Junot Díaz, Sonia Saldivar-Hull, Susan Sánchez-Casal, and Juan Flores, also use the term *Latina/o* to refer to themselves—often alongside their more nationalist ethnic identities.¹⁴ Not an ethnic identity in the usual sense, the term *Latina/o* refers to an articulated affiliation, a kind of “imaginary community,” that is based partly on the common

experience of being interpellated as a particular kind of "minority" person in the United States. Crucially, this minority experience is one that Latina/os do not share with people living outside this country. Moreover, it is an experience that is difficult for some Latin American and Spanish scholars who immigrate to this country (especially those who are from the elite classes in their own countries) to appreciate and understand. As a result, such scholars often give too little credence, at least initially, to the political viewpoints and struggles through which many Latina/os in the U.S. have come to define themselves.

It should be clear by now that my objection to Gracia's concept of Hispanic is based on the fact that he conceives of it as an identity category. By way of a response, I have argued that not only does his account of Hispanic ethnic identity fail to provide any substantive hints about the people it purports to describe, but it cannot account for the experiential and subjective component of ethnic identification. In arguing with Gracia, however, I have not meant to imply a blanket condemnation of his book—my argument is specific and located within the realm of social identity. Furthermore, I am willing to consider the possibility that the concept of Hispanic as he defines it may indeed be appropriate for some uses. To judge the entirety of Gracia's book, we need to consider *why* he argues for concept of Hispanic. I propose that what Gracia calls his "illustration" is, in fact, his motivation (see Chapter 4, "An Illustration: Hispanic Philosophy"). That is, what Gracia is really concerned with in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* is creating a space for, and legitimating, the largely ignored philosophical writings of philosophers from Spain, the countries of Latin America, and the descendants of Spaniards and Latin Americans who are living in the U.S. This is a worthy project and one with which I wholly concur. But a concept, *Hispanic*, that might be appropriate for a large-scale philosophical project is not appropriate for thinking about the social and political identities of embodied human beings. After all, spheres of intellectual influence transcend the borders of time and place relatively easily. Groups of embodied human beings, on the other hand, are far less portable. Insofar as a category of identity is most meaningful when it signals the location in both time and space of a particular group of people, it makes sense to use identity terms—*Chicano*, *Cuban American*, *Puerto Rican*, or even *Latina/o* (when considered as an imaginary community in the sense that I described above)—that actually connote some substantive and particular characteristics of the group being referred to. So, even though Gracia's concept of Hispanic is neither valuable nor innocent when considered as a category of identity, it may yet be useful and illuminating as a category for denoting a particular body of philosophical work.¹⁵ I may not *be* Hispanic, but I can still learn from and enjoy Hispanic philosophy.

Endnotes

1. Gracia writes that "every group should, in principle, be allowed to choose its own name . . . , as long as the members of the group are permitted to object and call themselves by whatever other name they choose. I say 'in principle' because ignorance and prejudice should not be allowed to go unchallenged. It is not good to allow a view based on misinformation to go unchallenged, particularly when that view affects other people" (5). Elsewhere, he suggests that those who object to the designation Hispanic for the reason that it unfairly privileges Spanish, Iberian, and European elements

over Amerindian and African ones, or that the term is associated with oppression and exploitation, utilize arguments that are "based in part on misinformation, prejudice, and ignorance" (61).

2. See my essays, "Postmodernism, 'Realism,'" and "Chicana Feminism," as well as my forthcoming book, *Learning From Experience*.

3. Gracia opens his book by asking, "Should we call ourselves Hispanics? Should we call ourselves Latinos/Latinas (henceforth Latinos/as)? Or should we reject any name?" before concluding that "These are the only realistic alternatives we have for there is no other term in wide use to refer to us" (1). Throughout the book, as in these opening sentences, the existence of the group designated by Gracia's "we" is presupposed. As a consequence, Gracia rejects any number of possible names on the grounds that they exclude one or more components of the group he identifies as Hispanics.

4. Appiah assumes that because scientists cannot define the concept of race biologically or genetically, races are not "real," and therefore, should not matter. He writes: "But if biological difference between human beings is unimportant in [explanations of our exercise of cultural capacities]—and it is—then racial difference, as a species of biological difference, will not matter either." He concludes by implying that, as educated people, scholars should dispense with the concept of race altogether: "The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask 'race' to do for us. The evil that is done is done by the concept and by easy—yet impossible—assumptions as to its application. What we miss through our obsession with the structure of relations of concepts is, simply, reality" (35-6).

5. In the U.S. at the turn of the 21st century, "race" and "ethnicity" are two related but nevertheless distinct concepts. Racial categorization is more dependent on visible morphological characteristics, while ethnic categorization is more closely correlated with language, nationality, religion, and culture. Thus, it is possible for two people who are members of the same ethnic group to be categorized as members of two different racial categories. Even so, the concept of ethnicity as it is commonly understood has been subtly racialized in such a way that "ethnic" frequently connotes "non-white." This is why people who appear to be "white," for instance, can more easily escape ethnic categorization.

6. See Alcoff, "Philosophy and Racial Identity," for an account of how the concept of race is mediated through a visual registry.

7. See Hames-García, "Who Are Our Own People?" for a complementary account of how Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance can be applied to social identity.

8. Gracia argues that "The concept of Hispanic allows us to see aspects of our reality that would otherwise be missed. They would be missed to a great extent because the conceptual frameworks used would be either too broad or too narrow to allow us to see them... The concept of Hispanic is indeed a window to the history of a chapter in universal human history, our history. In the vast panorama of humankind, it introduces a frame that directs the attention of the observer toward something that, under different conditions, would be given little attention, or missed altogether, because of the vastness of the view... 'Hispanic opens for us a window to ourselves which yields knowledge we would otherwise not have. At the same time, it allows us to notice things which we would miss if we used narrower concepts such as Mexican, Argentinian, Spanish and so on'" (51-2).

9. Families, Gracia explains, "are related clusters of persons with different, and sometimes incompatible characteristics, and purity of any kind is not one of our necessary conditions. This is why families are in a constant process of change and adaptation. My claim is that this is how we should understand ourselves as Hispanics" (50).

10. I do not mean to imply that Gracia insists that the use of the term *Hispanic* precludes a recognition of other identity categories such as Mexican, Tarahumara, Chicano, Venezuelan, etc. In fact,

he specifically suggests otherwise. However, the rhetorical force of his book serves to promote the use of the term *Hispanic* over all others whenever and wherever the question of ethnic identity arises. In his conclusion, for example, he writes: "My thesis is that Hispanics/Latinos constitute such a historical family and, therefore, that identifying ourselves as such is not only justified but useful. Moreover, I also propose that, more than any other label, the term 'Hispanic' serves to name us. Why? Because it is the only one which appears even remotely justifiable, and it is the only one which can gather within it the historical family constituted by Iberians, Latin Americans and Hispanic Americans. . . . We are one, then, and we should be called by one name, Hispanics" (191).

11. The Hispanic American Studies Program at Cornell University was approved in 1987 in order "to address the long-standing need of the University for meaningful academic study of the linguistic, literary, historical, sociological and economic experience of the Hispanic American" (Almirall-Padamsee, et. al.). The original proposal defined the "Hispanic American" as the "Hispano, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban-American and Central and South American Hispanic raised bilingually and biculturally in the United States [who] has made significant contributions to the growth of the United States." It very clearly delimits the objects of study as those individuals living within the United States: "For the Hispanic and non-Hispanic scholar at Cornell, a Hispanic Studies Program will fill a clear gap in the existing curriculum. Unlike Latin American Studies, which focuses on countries other than the United States, the Hispanic Studies Program will create a forum for the discussion of issues pertinent to Hispanics living in this country" (Almirall-Padamsee, et. al.).

12. The name of the Hispanic American Studies Program (HASP) at Cornell University was changed to the Latino Studies Program (LSP) in 1996 in response to student demand.

13. See her book, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation*.

14. See Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic"; Diaz, *Drown*; Flores, "The Latino Imaginary"; Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border*; Sánchez-Casal, "In a Neighborhood of Another Color"; Schutte, "Negotiating Latina Identities."

15. Perhaps Gracia assumes that the existence of Hispanic philosophy necessitates the existence of Hispanic people, and this is why he argues so strongly in favor of Hispanic identity. However, as long as there is some other logic behind the category of Hispanic philosophy—such as identifiable strains of intellectual influence—I do not think that the existence of one necessitates the existence of the other.

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Latin American Social Thought and Latino/as American Studies*

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Introduction

The topic here are the relationships between social critical thought in Latin America and Latino/as Studies in the U.S. The focus is on the former. I make an effort to look, first, at Latino/as Studies and Latin American Studies (in the U.S.) from the perspective of social and critical thought in Latin America. Secondly, I try to show the similarities of the social and critical thoughts in Latin America and Latino/as Studies. Thirdly, I argue that the transformation of Latin American (Area) Studies would require not only that knowledge production in the "areas" to be studied be recognized. It would be imperative for displacing the "scientific" principles (the distinction between the geopolitical location of the knower and of the known) that inform Latin America and Area Studies and that organize the scientific distribution of labor in a planetary scale. Finally I look at the intersections of the three mentioned domains from the perspective of someone who has some investments in all of them and that believes in the epistemological potentials of critical thought (Lander 2000, Zemelman 2000) in Latin America and of Latino Studies in the U.S. The best possible future I can imagine is the productive tri-logue (or dialogue between three participants) between the three epistemic locations, avoiding the universalistic temptation of subsuming two of them under the third and "right" one. This is the basic principle under which I will make a claim for diversality or epistemic diversity as universal project. That is, A project with many owners with the same amount of shares.

The Problem and the Argument

The argument I would like to advance here is the following. The emergence of Latino/a Studies is forcing scholars and intellectuals interested in geo-historically defined fields of knowledge to start thinking about the end of Latin American Studies (and by extension about Area Studies) as we knew them until today. But in order to advance this argument it is

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