Augusto Salazar Bondy
(1925-1974)

The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Philosophic Thought
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- Bondy argues that it begins with the Conquest of the Americas; Pre-Conquest/Pre-Columbian Can’t Really be Included in the Category of Hispanic Thought
- There’s not enough objective evidence to make warranted conclusions about it
- There’s no evidence that it was integrated with later developments or that there was any cultural-social-political interaction with various peoples of the era.
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- Through the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, post-conquest Hispanic philosophy is driven by ecclesiastical European thought and is presented to serve European political ends.
- The overall tone was emphatically anti-modernist and conservative.
- Bondy found very few “sporadic” and “heroic” exceptions that appear during this time (p. 382).

Dióscoro Teófilo Puebla Tolín - The First Landing of Christopher Columbus in America (1862)
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- Through the 16th and 17th centuries, the scholastic approach to philosophy in Latin America — even when it included issues indigenous to the Americas — was nearly always written from the Spanish point of view.

- Bondy writes, “There was not, and perhaps could not have been, at least at the beginning of the Spanish period, anything like an original American approach to a doctrine that would respond to the motivations of men of this continent.” (p. 382)
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- The 18th Century brought changes in Hispanic thought that reflected the changes in Europe – both scientific discoveries (Galileo and Newton) and philosophic revolutions (Descartes, Locke, Hume, Leibnitz)

- “…the enlightened Hispanic American ideology is nothing other than the transplantation of the philosophy of the European….” (p.383)
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- The 19th Century heralded the political liberation from Spanish Domination in the Hispanic American world which similarly liberated Hispanic American thought but it was still under constraints now produced by the precarious socio-political situation.

- Cesare-Dell’Acqua: The Mexican Deligation appoints Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria as Emperor of Mexico (1864) Historical Museum of Castello di Miramare
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- The 19th Century Hispanic American thought is still heavily influenced by developments in Europe: French & British romanticism, French sensualism, Scottish common-sense philosophy, German idealism and in the latter part of the 19th century, French positivism.

Cesare-Dell'Acqua: The Mexican Deligation appoints Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria as Emperor of Mexico (1864) Historical Museum of Castello di Miramare
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

• The 20th Century brought about a rejection of positivism and a period of self-criticism. During this time a serious effort is made to develop an academic, university-centered philosophical movement.

• Vasconcelos y Antonio Caso con un grupo de antiguos integrantes del Ateneo de la Juventud.
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- But these 20th Century philosophers were still responding to key movements in Europe—the Italian Benedetto Croce, Germany’s Marx, Heidegger and Husserl, France’s Jean Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Henri Bergson and from the United States, William James.
A Brief History of Hispanic Philosophy:

- Bondy concludes from this history, “...what we find in all our countries is a succession of imported doctrines, a procession of systems which follows European, or, in general, foreign unrest. It is almost a succession of intellectual fashions without roots in our spiritual life and, for this very reason, lacking the virtue of fertility.” (p.387)
Seven Defining Characteristics of Hispanic American Philosophy:

- From this historical survey, Bondy argues that one can find these key characteristics which support his claim that Hispanic American philosophy lacks originality:
  - 1) “Imitative sense of thought
  - 2) Universal receptivity … which betrays a lack of substance in ideas and convictions
  - 3) Absence of a characteristic, definitive tendency
  - 4) Correlative absence of original contributions
  - 5) Existence of a strong sense of intellectual frustration (driven by) … a vivid consciousness of their lack of speculative originality
  - 6) There has existed permanently in Hispanic America a great distance between those who practice philosophy and the whole of the community
  - 7) The same scheme of historic development and the same constellation of traits — although negative — are suitable to the activity unfolded during more than four centuries by the men dedicated to philosophy in a plurality of countries….”
    - (pp.388-89)
On Authenticity in Philosophy:

- As with Zea, we return to Hegel who Bondy uses to characterize what an authentic philosophy ought to look like.

- Hegel wrote, “Philosophy is the philosophy of its time, a link in the great chain of universal evolution; from whence it derives that it can only satisfy the peculiar interests of its time.” (p.390)
On Authenticity in Philosophy:

- Bondy requires that the philosopher make a “vital commitment” that is to say – the philosopher must be intellectually all in.
- The philosopher can have neither the abstract objectivity of the scientist nor must he be motivated by suggestion or feelings as with a person of religious faith.
- Continuing on this theme of the central characteristics of authentic philosophy, Bondy writes, “…philosophy deals with the total truth of a rationally clarified existence, that appeals to the totality of the personal human being and its full lucidity.” (p.390)
On Unauthenticity in Philosophy:

- Bondy argues that Hispanic American philosophy lacks this defining quality which Hegel describes and has instead become “sterile” and “mystified”

- Bondy claims that this mystification occurs when, “…philosophy loses itself as a truthful conscience… when philosophy is constructed as an imitated thought, as a superficial and episodic transference of ideas and principles motivated by the existential projects of other men, by attitudes toward the world that cannot be repeated or shared.” (pp390-91)
Why does Hispanic America lack authentic philosophy?

- Bondy rejects the following four explanations and attitudes towards this defect:
  - 1) Bondy argues that Hispanic thought cannot be seen as the synthesis of the Hegelian dialectical process which simply began in imitation – for “our thought has proved that it cannot life without external sustenance.” (p.392)

  - 2) Bondy also rejects the idea that Hispanic America lacks a philosophic disposition – that the “genius” of Hispanic America “is better endowed for other spiritual creations.” (ibid.) This cannot be the case because the defect can be observed to extend beyond philosophy and include “the entire gambit of culture” in Hispanic America. (p.393)

  - 3) Bondy also dismisses the explanation that Hispanic America is just too young as a culture – it “lacks the intellectual tradition” to produce authentic philosophy. Bondy cites a similarly young culture – the United States – as the counter-example of this idea since it has managed to produce authentic work.

  - 4) The fourth explanation is that Hispanic America, due to the precarious socio-political and economic conditions has not been able to establish the great university systems that can produce great philosophers. Bondy maintains that one must not confuse mere philosophy professors with creative philosophers – that many of the latter in the history of philosophy didn’t have the university system behind them either.
Instead of the four preceding explanations Bondy links the lack of authentic philosophy to the lack of an authentic culture. He wrote, “Our thought is defective and unauthentic owing to our society and our culture.” (p396)

Here’s Bondy’s basic argument:

- P1) Authentic philosophy requires authentic cultures
- P2) There have been no authentic cultures in Hispanic America

C) There has been no authentic philosophy in Hispanic America
What is an authentic culture?

- Bondy argues for a “strong and unique concept of culture” as, “the organic articulation of the original and differentiating manifestations of a community – susceptible to serving as a guide to contrast the historic work of peoples.” (p.391)

- This working definition sets aside other definitions such as modes of working, proceedings or manner of reacting since they could refer to any social group.
Why does Hispanic America lack authentic culture?

- Bondy claims that, “a defect of culture may be observed” in Hispanic America….It has been a plagiarized novel and not the truthful chronicle of our human adventure.” (p.392)
Why does Hispanic America lack authentic culture?

- Bondy maintains “that Hispanic Americans live behind a feigned being.” (p.394)

- He supports this by arguing that virtually every institution in Hispanic America (democracy, free enterprise, justice, religion, the University & morality) has begun as an imitation based on “models of culture that have no roots in our condition of existence,” and then has become, “a deformed product which passes itself off as the original model.” (ibid.)
Why does Hispanic America lack authentic culture?

- For Bondy, the cause of Hispanic America’s failure to produce an authentic culture is a history of dependence, domination and subsequent underdevelopment.

- Here are a few key factors:
  - The initial conquest by Spain which has a “culture of domination” (p. 395).
  - The imposition and continuation of thought principally of the upper class or of a “refined oligarchical elite.” (ibid.)
  - A habit/nature of imitation and receptivity.
  - Depressed economies and lack of social cohesion.
So... can Hispanic America produce authentic philosophy?

- Bondy maintains that it is possible if...
  - it can transcend its current circumstances – Bondy argues that philosophy will most likely have to serve as the “messenger of the dawn” and become the means by which the culture itself is transformed and projected into the future. (p.397)

  - it can adopt an attitude of rigorous self-examination and ruthless eradication of all that is false – the “prejudice, myths, idols” that have prevented authentic expression (ibid.) – this is the “negative” phase of the process.

  - it can affirm the humanity of this world and find qualities of Hispanic America that express this humanity positively. “These qualities and values must be precisely those capable of finding resonance in the entirety of Hispanic America, and, along with other convergent forces, unleashing a progressive movement that will eliminate underdevelopment and domination.
So... can Hispanic America produce authentic philosophy?

- “Our philosophy should be, then, both theory and application, conceived and executed in our own fashion, according to our own standards and qualities....and applied in accord with our own ends.” (p.398)