Paper #1: Mariátegui & “The Problem of the Indian”

Read the section on Mariátegui on pages 35-71 in the Schutte text and the essay entitled, “The Problem of the Indian,” in the Gracia text, then answer the following questions. The completed assignment should be two pages long, (approximately 1400 words) using 12 pt. fonts and single spacing with one inch margins. Please follow the assigned format as exemplified at the end of this document. Each answer should be separated, numbered and proportionate to the number of points possible. Supporting quotes should be no longer than one or two short sentences. Quotes must be cited and if pulled from our text all you need do is indicate the page – if not from our text, a full citation is required. This paper is worth a total of 50 points.

Your completed assignment is due on the 4th of March.

Keep scrolling down after the background for further instructions, general suggestions, grading rubrics, and a sample completed assignment!

Questions:

1. What is the specific philosophical problem that Mariátegui is addressing in this essay? In which particular philosophic category or area does this problem belong? (E.g. issues of ethics, political or social justice, identity, etc.) Explain briefly. (5 points)

2. What is Mariátegui’s proposed solution to the problem identified in question #1? What reasons does he offer in defense of this solution? Explain making effective use of space allowed. (25 points)

3. Counter-consideration: Explain Mariátegui’s reasons offered in his rejection of formal education as a solution to the problem? Explain both the counter-consideration and the philosopher’s response. (10 points)

4. Critical response: Develop a counter-argument to any part of Mariátegui’s argument. Briefly defend your response. (10 points)
General Suggestions for Writing Papers

How not to write your paper:

I. Focus & Relevance
Be sure that you understand the assignment and have understood each question. Your responses should be focused on the questions I’ve asked & not the questions you wish I had asked! It is important to weed out all irrelevant considerations or concerns that an economist or historian or political scientist might have but are not strictly speaking, philosophical concerns. Look at the completed sample case study for some ideas.

II. Format
You should copy & paste or re-type only the portion in bold type of each question. Please number each response corresponding to the assigned questions. Papers should be 2 pages, using 12pt. fonts and 1 inch margins all around. Again, please reference the completed sample case study and follow the format exemplified.

III. Tone/Voice
Avoid use of language that is derivative of the essay or of me. Ever since George Carlin pointed out that “using your own words” would result in a private and hence meaningless expressions, I’ve had to give up on the phrase, however a certain degree of originality is still important. Your task is to explain a concept as if you were the Teaching Assistant for this class. If you simply repeat the text or my lecture, you haven’t helped your imaginary student. You need to clarify the argument/concept in a way that demonstrates that you really understand it and can express the same ideas in a way that is different than has already been explained by the text or by me.

IV. Adequate and Balanced Defense of Your Argument
In questions two through four, you are asked to explain or make an argument using the philosopher we’re studying. You should be clear in your thesis early in the paragraph. It is important to ensure that your application is consistent with the philosopher’s theory and that you support that application with a well-thought-out defense.

1 Please note that these guidelines are for my class assignments. Individual instructors may have other format preferences and you should consult with your teacher for the details before completing your assignment.
V. **Quotes**
Quoting is a way of supporting your interpretation of an argument or theory. Relevance to your response and to the question asked is critical. Quotes can be edited but be careful not to take the quote out of context, thus altering the intent of the author. The length of the quote must be appropriate to the length of the assignment: short papers require shorter quotes. All quotes **must come from the original author’s works**, neither from the secondary commentary of the author of our text nor from my lectures or power points. Quotes need only be cited with the page in our text where it was found (see sample completed assignment). **You may not use quotes that I’ve already used in my lectures or power-point slides!**

VI. **Length**
Part of the criteria for success is efficient use of the space allowed. If you write a single page for a two page assignment, you have not satisfied this criterion. However, this is not an invitation to use the additional space for stream-of-consciousness or irrelevant information not pertinent to the assigned issue. If you are having difficulties with the length, it is usually because you have not recognized or developed sufficiently the various issues involved. Conversely, if your draft is too long, you need to whittle it down to just the relevant essentials, perhaps editing out the anecdotes or redundancies; more is not always better! I am very willing to help if you submit drafts sufficiently before the due date.

VII. **Rough Drafts**
I have invited all of you to bring rough drafts of your completed assignment in for a preview reading. **I do not offer re-writes after I have graded your papers.** Rough drafts are brought in during my office hours or by appointment and I only read them in person - with the student present. Please do not submit rough drafts electronically nor should you drop them off in my box.

I support pro-active measures that encourage preparation and thought and with rough draft readings, both the student and I should benefit with the end result being a better final draft. If your work satisfies my criteria (see rubrics following) for “A” level work, and if the draft is formatted and printed in final draft format, I will sign off on the draft, guaranteeing those students somewhere between 100% and 90% of the points possible for this assignment. Your cut-off for rough draft submissions is 24 hours prior to the due date; I will read no rough drafts the day of or the day prior to the due date.

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*Keep scrolling down for rubrics and a sample satisfactorily completed assignment!*
Standards (Rubrics) for Grading Papers

The excellent paper (100-90% of points) will exhibit the following qualities:

Question 1:
- Philosophical problem is clearly identified in the first sentence.
- Paraphrase of the problem is original in non-derivative language and not merely a verbatim repetition of original document.
- Problem is clearly understood and is expressed in a manner that is consistent with the author’s intent.
- No critique, analysis or irrelevant commentary is provided.

Question 2:
- A clear statement of the proposed solution is made in the first sentence.
- The explanation of the solution is consistent with the assigned philosopher’s theory.
- Paraphrase of the argument is original in non-derivative language and not merely a verbatim repetition of original document.
- The explanation is effectively supported with relevant reasoned discussion.
- Sufficient detail from the philosopher’s theory is provided.
- Argument is **effectively** supported with relevant quotes from the philosopher’s primary work & all quotes are cited properly. (Note that in the example to make the most effective use of space allowed, endnotes were used; endnotes do not count as part of the 2 page limit.) Quotes are not too numerous or disproportionate to student’s original discussion, are of appropriate length, and quotes are not those which have been used in lectures or on power point slides.
- No immediate personal bias is evidenced.

Question 3:
- Counter-consideration is clearly identified in the first sentence.
- Counter-consideration is characterized in a manner that is consistent with the philosopher’s argument.
- The philosopher’s response to the counter-consideration is explained fully given the space allowed.
- Paraphrase of the argument is original in non-derivative language and not merely a verbatim repetition of original document.

Question 4:
- Critical objection is clearly stated in first sentence
- Reasons offered in support of thesis reflect a thoughtful and fair approach to the details of the assigned philosopher’s theory.
- Discussion is original and not repetitive of any previous section.

Overall Impressions:
- Paper presents evidence of a thoughtful and deliberative approach.
• Language is clear and explanations/arguments are original using non-derivative language
• Paper reflects that the author has explored the issue beyond the essay provided - Responses reflect thoughtful and detailed consideration of not only background material provided but also a further familiarity with the events and history surrounding the issue.
• Paper is scholarly, with effective use of the essays and relevant philosophical theory.
• There is good logic flow from one response to another – issues raised in earlier questions must link logically with responses to later questions.
• Effective use has been made of space allowed – each response is proportionate the maximum points possible for that question.
• Assignment format has been followed.

**Good (89-80% points)**
The good paper will demonstrate all the above qualities but perhaps to a lesser degree or, will demonstrate some of the above qualities excellently, but not all of the qualities will be presented at a consistently high level.

**Satisfactory (79-70% points)**
The satisfactory paper will present all of the above qualities but not as strongly as the good paper or, some qualities may be stronger with some not as strong. Insight is not usually present.

**Needs Work (69-60% points)**
This paper is weak on many of the desired qualities.

**Really Needs Work – Pretty Much Unacceptable (59-0% points)**
This paper presents few if any of the desired qualities.

*Keep scrolling down for a sample satisfactorily completed assignment!*
1. The Philosophical Problem: In this essay, Gracia is addressing the issue of whether a diverse group of philosophers' works should or even could be grouped together by a common ethnic label. Is there such a thing as “Latin American philosophy?” This question is both semantic in that one is asking about the meaning of such a category and ontological, questioning the existence and nature of such a thing.

2. Gracia’s Proposed Solution:

Gracia argues that Latin American philosophy does indeed exist and the category itself can be meaningful and useful if and only if the conditions for belonging to this category are defined in a flexible manner. Further, Gracia argues that it must be recognized that these philosophical works are not produced in isolation, but are related to and influenced by other historical works both within and outside of the category. Gracia wrote, “…ethnic philosophies are historical realities enmeshed in webs of complicated relations, and a proper understanding of them must reflect this reality.” For this reason, membership in one category such as Latin American philosophy should not exclude that same work being included in membership in another non-ethnic category such as Marxist Socialist Thought.

First, Gracia points out that in understanding the category of an ethnic philosophy, specifically Latin American philosophy, it should not be expressed in strict terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Any particular criteria such as being written in Spanish, by a philosopher born in a Latin American country or having a particular genetic makeup, responding to issues of coloniality or other issues thought to be particular to Latin American philosophy would rule out too many works that are central to the category.

Gracia borrows from Wittgenstein the idea that one can have a general understanding and be able to use a term usefully without knowing the necessary and sufficient conditions for its definition. The examples cited are the terms, “game” and “funny.” From this, Gracia argues that the term “Latin American philosophy” could be treated in a relevantly similar manner. We understand the term by how it is used. At times one factor may dictate the inclusion of a work into the category and at other times, other factors may be referenced.

Gracia points out that there are some logical implications of taking this sort of approach—which he is willing to accept. We may not ever have a complete understanding of what is included in Latin American philosophy. Gracia suggests that the membership be viewed not in terms of black or white/ in or out, but in a “more or less” framework. Membership may be a matter of degree and not an absolute. It also follows that in determining membership, one may have to understand the historical context and relationships that work has with many other works which came before. This makes the job of classification not so much a matter of using a measuring stick but of studying a philosophical networked system. Finally, these works under consideration may have memberships in many categories. Gracia references works of art such as that of Picasso and this is a useful analogy; Picasso was born in Málaga, Spain and studied early in his life in Barcelona but he moved to Paris in 1904 and died in Mougins, France. Does that make him a Spanish or French painter? Both countries claim him. He was a co-creator of Cubism which emerged from the Impressionist schools of art but he also painted in the Realism...
mode and influenced the Surrealism movement. In which category does he fit? In the art world, he is often seen as all of the above, depending on the work and period of his life. In the same manner we might view the world of Latin American philosophy – sometimes this and sometimes that, depending on the focus and scholarly background of the reader.

3. Counter-Consideration:

Gracia rejects three other possible ways of defining Latin American philosophy which he calls nativist, originalist and culturalist. The nativist theory holds that a work is Latin American if it originates in Latin America. Gracia brings up three objections to this idea. Gracia argues there are few if any ideas that can be held to be entirely originated in Latin America. Further, the work could be written by a Latin American thinker and about ideas central to Latin American issues but because it originated outside of Latin America – for instance that philosopher lived in Paris, this criterion would rule out such a work from being included in the category.

The originalist theory holds that for something to be called Latin American, the work must be entirely original. This theory is easily dismissed by the following, “…for the thought of every thinker is the product of many ideas borrowed from many different sources.” No philosophical work appears in a vacuum without reference to much that has come before it.

Finally, the culturalist theory holds that a work may be Latin American if it is “the product of Latin American culture.” Gracia has two objections to this approach. First, it has proved very controversial to develop a precise definition of Latin American culture. Secondly, it would require the content of all works in the category to be culturally specific. This is particularly problematic because by its very nature, philosophy more often seeks to transcend the particular and seek out more universal truths about the human condition, the nature and possibility of knowledge, and the nature of reality.

4. Critical Response:

While I think he is probably right, I find the practical application of Gracia’s treatment of Latin American philosophy somewhat problematic. The usefulness of the term Latin American philosophy seems somewhat minimalized under Gracia’s Wittgensteinian treatment. What one wants to know is how Latin American philosophy is different from other sorts of philosophies. Gracia talks of a body of work as “more or less” belonging to the category and that it takes a certain degree of familiarity with the use of the term to understand how some philosopher or body of work merits such membership. But, can a cat be more or less a dog? My sister used the word, “dog” to represent all things that she liked, including our family cat. One could reasonably argue that knowing what a cat is and why it is not a dog requires a knowledge of the essential species differences in their biology and in this way, my sister was just wrong: cats and dogs are not the same thing. Is there no analogous hallmark distinction of Latin American philosophy that would allow one to differentiate it from English, German, or Indian philosophy? Gracia tells us that it is not readily discovered. This seems to be an issue of, “you have to see the whole in order to understand the parts.” This makes recognizing works as belonging to the species of philosophy called Latin American somewhat problematic, especially for the beginning student of philosophy as it requires a degree of virtuosity and breadth of scholarship not easily attained. Perhaps recognizing this problem, Gracia himself proposed a partial solution in offering up a hybrid geographical/ethnic description in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Gracia wrote, “Latin American philosophy is generally understood to be philosophy produced in Latin America or philosophy produced by persons of Latin American ancestry who reside outside of Latin America.” It is granted that this statement is fairly broad but it seems much clearer than the “more or less” membership approach he has advocated in the essay reviewed.

