

The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Philosophic Thought

I

This [essay] assumes that Hispanic American philosophical thought began with the discovery of America and the Spanish Conquest; and that it is now possible to trace its development, to classify its distinctive epochs, and to define its characteristic traits. The assumption arbitrarily casts aside the rich pre-Columbian cultural past for a variety of reasons. First, there are no data sufficiently precise and trustworthy concerning the thought of the indigenous peoples. Second, there was no integration, nor even sufficient sociopolitical and cultural interaction among the pre-Conquest peoples. The historic community which we customarily call Hispanic America did not exist before the sixteenth century, and it is only beginning with this century that we can find cultural products that are definitely philosophical. These considerations explain, at least methodologically, the point of departure and the thematic focus and limitation of my presentation.

The process of Hispanic American philosophical thought begins with the introduction of the dominant Spanish currents of the period within the framework of the official political and ecclesiastical system of education. The principal goal was to form the subjects of the New World according to the ideas and values sanctioned by the Spanish State and Church. Those doctrines harmonious with the political and spiritual domination pursued by the temporal and religious organs of Spain were brought to America and propagated in our countries. In this way, Hispanic Americans

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learned as a first philosophy or mode of thought, a system of ideas that responded to the motivations of men of the Old World.

Except for the sporadic and, at times, heroic appearance of philosophies with a greater critical edge and fewer ideological-political compromises with the established power (such as renaissance platonism and erasmist humanism), the doctrine officially disseminated and protected is the scholastic in its late Spanish version. Although it certainly was not lacking in some high points, such as Suárez, it was following paths very different from those of the modern spirit. Thus, besides being official and centered on European interests, the first Hispanic American philosophy was conservative and antimodern in thought.

American themes did not, however, fail to make themselves felt as a new element in the theoretical concern. There is a wealth of philosophic-theological meditations on the humanity of the Indian, on the right to make war on the aborigines, and on the justification to dominate America, which constitutes the most valuable thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because of it, scholasticism momentarily achieved a live and creative tone, precisely when it touched on the problems of existence in this area which had been recently conquered and was in the process of colonization. But, apart from those few outstanding Hispanic American teachers and disseminators of philosophy in this period, much of the philosophical theorizing, including that which dealt with specifically American themes, was done from the Spanish perspective. 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.

The predominance of scholasticism lasted until the eighteenth century. Then, America began to feel the impact of ideas and currents that were contrary to scholasticism and very representative of the new direction that European thought took beginning with the Renaissance. This was due in part to factors operating in Spain itself, such as the liberalizing policy of the ministers of Charles III and the work of writers of a reform spirit, like Father Feijoo. It was also due to such factors as travelers and scientific expeditions that were operating within the territories under Spanish domination. Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Hugo Grotius, as well as Galileo and Newton, were among the first authors who had a revolutionary effect among us, even though the phenomenon, measured against European chronology, is clearly late.

The number of foreign books and magazines and of commentaries and readers of modern taste increased hurriedly as the eighteenth century advanced, and resounding names of powerful progressive influence appeared on the intellectual horizon of the Hispanic Americans. Some of the principal ones are Condillac, Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Benjamin

Constant. At the same time, educational and cultural institutions were renovated in those cities that served as viceregal capitals or seats of the *audiencia*; the so-called Caroline colleges and the "Friends of the Country" societies appeared; and cultural reviews of unquestionable value were published. An awakening of critical awareness and a first hint of national and American consciousness are perceptible in the period. This cultural atmosphere is equivalent, at least on the exterior, to what is known in Europe as the period of the Enlightenment. And the doctrinary link is clear, for the enlightened Hispanic American ideology is nothing other than the transplantation of the philosophy of the European, especially the French, Enlightenment. Like France, this epoch in Hispanic America was also a period of important political changes, which was garbed in modern philosophical thought: the changes of the emancipating revolution which by 1824 was to cancel out Spanish power in the majority of our countries.

The new political plateau achieved with political independence in Hispanic America was paralleled in philosophic thought. Subsequently, this thought developed freely, without the hindrance of monarchical censorship. On the other hand, it had to develop within the precariousness imposed by the sociopolitical crisis confronted by nearly all the brand-new republics in this part of the hemisphere during the nineteenth century. Let us consider briefly this later development.

There is an initial, well-defined period of evolution that extends from the revolution of independence until approximately 1870. Because it coincides with Romanticism, it is customarily designated as romantic. It was dominated successively by the so-called philosophy of ideology—that is, the last form of French sensualism—the doctrines of the Scottish school of common sense, and finally, the eclectic spiritualism of French derivation and the Krausist version of German idealism. These doctrines constituted the philosophic sustenance not only of academicians, but also of publicists and the politicians of the time. The latter generally adhered to two principal parties, one of a liberal tendency, and the other conservative. Their bitter disputes were often concerned more with pragmatic and political differences than with the ultimate philosophical bases of their thought. They were not always opposed, for example, in metaphysics and esthetics, and it is not unusual to find the same European philosophers accepted as doctrinary mentors by both liberal and conservative writers. Perhaps it would be more exact to say that the same philosophies were selectively accepted by both groups and applied according to their own orientation. Also in this period Hispanic America felt, albeit weakly, the influence of utopic socialism and anarchism.

In the final decades of the century the tendency of the Hispanic American intelligentsia was to turn toward another doctrine, or complex of doctrines, formed by the positivism of Auguste Comte in France, and various other con-

temporary currents of thought, such as Naturalism, Materialism, Experimentalism, and Evolutionism. From all these ideological elements was gleaned the so-called positivist creed that the intellectual sectors of practically all Hispanic American countries, in varying intensity and amplitude, adopted and defended for nearly four decades, until the early years of this century.

In this period, the popularity of Comte was equaled, if not exceeded, by that of Spencer. Through his teachings, evolution was imposed as a universal explanatory principle, applied to realms of both physical nature and society. In the latter case, it was used equally to justify the predominance of the bourgeoisie and the claims of the proletariat. Nevertheless, Positivism was fundamentally a philosophical doctrine adopted by the upper classes of Hispanic America in the period of establishment and consolidation of international capitalism in our countries.

In the midst of the Positivist movement itself, there arose surpassing tendencies which, when amplified and strengthened, were to mark a new stage in Hispanic American thought. This phenomenon was, above all, a reflection of the changes in European philosophic conscience, but it must also be explained in part by the movement's doctrinary heterogeneity, in which the most laic and even irreligious convictions were tolerated alongside the most frank professions of Christian faith. Some individuals characterized as representatives of the Positivist philosophy were, indeed, the first to criticize their earlier convictions. They were convinced not only of the necessity of rectifying the errors and raising the barriers of Positivist thought, but they also felt that there already were figures and systems in the philosophic market of the period capable of replacing the old doctrine advantageously.

Added to these impulses of self-criticism was the decisive action of a group of dynamic university professors. At the time they were dedicating their best efforts both to disposing Positivist philosophy and to the development of a serious university philosophical movement. For this reason they have been called the *founders*. Outstanding among them were the Argentine Alejandro Korn, the Uruguayan Carlos Vaz Ferreira, the Chilean Enrique Molina, the Peruvian Alejandro Deustua, and the Mexicans José Vasconcelos and Antonio Caso. They are certainly not the only ones, but are indeed the principal ones in the strictly academic dominion of philosophy. They acted in harmony with other intellectual figures dedicated to giving a new meaning and a profounder and more authentic basis to the culture of our countries. Of the latter, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Alfonso Reyes are representative. (Let us add parenthetically that it is not by chance that until now we have not felt obliged to mention a single Hispanic American philosopher while tracing the history of our thought. As we shall see, there is reason for it. There were figures worthy of mention as teachers of valuable work, comparable to that of the *founders*, although generally possessed of less critical conscience and historical maturity than the latter. The

Mexican Antonio Rubio, the Peruvian Diego de Avendaño, the Venezuelan Agustín de Quevedo y Villegas, and the Chilean Alfonso de Briceño are scholastics of importance. The Mexican Benito Díaz de Gamarra is a very representative and distinguished, enlightened thinker. José de la Luz y Caballero, in Cuba, Andrés Bello, from Venezuela, José Vitoriano Lastarria of Chile, and the Argentine hero Juan Bautista Alberdi stand out in the first period of the nineteenth century. Some notable names of the Positivist movement are González Prada of Peru, the Mexican Justo Sierra, Eugenio María de Hostos from Puerto Rico, the Cuban Enrique José Varona, and the Argentine José Ingenieros. Let us content ourselves with this brief list, because we do not propose to depict in detail the development of our philosophical ideas, but rather to understand its character and meaning.)

The *founders*, whose work covers the first decades of this century, coincided not only in the rejection of Positivism, but also in the type of orientation that they wished to give philosophical thought and the Western mentors that they sought for this undertaking. They were fundamentally anti-naturalists, with marked idealistic or vitalistic sympathies (positions which are not always easily distinguished one from the other). They had a preference for dynamic concepts and intuitive thought that was not rigidly logical and consequently, they acquiesced generally with metaphysical speculation. Hence, their admiration for such authors as Boutroux, Croce, James, and above all, Bergson. The last became for the intellectuals the oracle that Spencer had once been. Bergsonism, with its concept of duration, of concrete and qualitative becoming, was consulted for all explanations, and was embraced and exalted not only by conservative sectors, but also by liberals. It was even accepted by the Marxists, who at this time were beginning to represent a definite current of thought in Hispanic America.

With Marxism and other orientations of social thought related or opposed to it, we reach the contemporary stage of Hispanic American philosophy, which extends approximately from the third decade of this century to the present. In the consideration of contemporary currents, it must be said of Marxism that, although it has had important political repercussions in recent years (such as the establishment of the socialist regime in Cuba) it is not the most influential philosophy in the universities, nor even among wide sectors of writers and intellectuals. It is, however, along with Catholic philosophy, the one that has received the greatest effort toward popularization.

In addition to Catholic philosophy, especially the neo-Thomist, favored by the Church in Hispanic America and generally concentrated in the confessional universities, other currents should be mentioned, for their impact on the university movement has been greater. These are, in the first place, phenomenology, both in Husserl's original form and in its ethical, esthetic, and ontological derivations developed by such thinkers as Max Scheler, Moritz Geiger, Alexander Pfander, and Nicolai Hartmann.

The phenomenological current is related to the existentialism of Heidegger (who was associated initially with Husserl), the Christian existential thought of Jaspers, and the atheistic existentialism of Sartre.

The diffusion of these and like philosophies, such as those of Eucken, Klages, and Keiserling, took place mainly from the end of the twenties until the Second World War. Viewed from a complementary perspective, this represents the influence of Germanic thought in Hispanic America, contemporary with the political and economic expansion of Germany that concluded with the slaughter of the war. Symptomatically, in the latter part of the forties, French philosophy began to penetrate and achieve great diffusion. In the main, it was the new existentialist trend represented by Sartre, as well as Camus, Marcel, and Merleau-Ponty. Sartrean penetration was facilitated by the use of literature as a means of expressing ideas, which made the themes and problems of contemporary philosophy accessible to a wider public than the strictly academic. The literary works of Camus have had an analogous effect. On the other hand, French existentialism is a thought directly connected with social and political problems, through doctrinary principles and the personal vocation of its creators. The committed intellectual (*engagé*) according to this philosophy, is the paradigm of the man of thought and letters. Hence, in spite of its technical complexities as a philosophy, it is welcomed among political spirits and the socially committed. This does not mean that French existentialism, especially that of Sartre, has not likewise penetrated Hispanic American academic circles. There, however, Sartre shares the favor of the professional public with Merleau-Ponty, and frequently with Heidegger, who continues to be considered the greatest theorist of the philosophy of existence.

Other themes and problems solicit the attention of those who have a serious philosophic concern, above all in centers of higher education. Logic, epistemology, and the investigation of language find ever-increasing numbers of cultivators. By the nature of their theoretical interest, they are prone to a more rigorous and objective—more technical, if you will—focus on the content of knowledge, and receive different influences from others mentioned above. One might insert here the influence of currents such as logical positivism, the analytic and linguistic school, or the Zurich school, associated with the names of Bertrand Russell, Rudolf Carnap, Gaston Bachelard, Ferdinand Gonseth, G. E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. This type of philosophy has become noticeably more important in Hispanic America during recent years as a consequence of the worldwide development of science and technology, and also the predominance of Anglo-American culture.

In the course of the process outlined here, philosophy has achieved in Hispanic America a level of acceptance and considerable expansion. University departments and professorships, societies and associations of specialists,

periodicals, books, and international connections are found today in practically all nations of Hispanic America. All of these factors, according to the most common critics of our time, are manifestations of a normal philosophical activity, and determine in large part the character and orientation of contemporary philosophical development. What used to be a sporadic exercise and an ephemeral product of very limited repercussions, is today a stable activity that can count on the necessary social means to assure its survival and progress, and increase its penetration in the life of the community.

But precisely to the degree that this regularization of philosophic practice (or *normalization*, as Francisco Romero called it) has been achieved, a profound interest has been aroused in the evolution of our ideas, and in the meaning and scope of our thought. Systematic studies of the history of ideas, reviews and organized schemes of philosophy in Hispanic America, supported by a proven scientific methodology, have sprung up, and have been disseminated and increased in the most recent decades. Likewise, a very serious and profound discussion has begun concerning the character and potential of philosophy in Hispanic America. This means that, as a result of all previous history, about which we know much more today than in the past, we are conscious (perhaps for the first time fully conscious) of the problems that affect our thought, or, better said, the radical problem of the authenticity and justification for our philosophizing.

II

Following this direction of current Hispanic American thought, let us inquire about the quality and scope of the intellectual products of the philosophizing whose four-hundred-year evolution we have briefly reviewed. Our balance cannot fail to be negative, as has been that of practically all historians and interpreters of ideas in Hispanic America. In fact, it is impossible to extract clearly from this process an articulation of ideas, a well-structured dialectic of reflections and expositions, and of concepts and solutions nurtured by its historical and cultural circumstance. On the contrary, 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. Just as scholastic colonial thought, as we saw, was imposed by the interests of the mother country, so also the systems that replaced it responded to [a] historical logic that was foreign to the conscience of our peoples. For this reason these systems were abandoned as quickly and easily as they were embraced, having been chosen by the upper class and the intellectual sectors of Hispanic Americans according to their immediate pref-

erences and momentary affinities. To review the process of Hispanic American philosophy is to relate the passing of Western philosophy *through* our countries, or to narrate European philosophy *in* Hispanic America. It is not to tell the history of a natural philosophy *of* Hispanic America. In our historical process there are Cartesians, Krausists, Spence-rians, Bergsonians, and other European “isms.” But this is all; there are no creative figures to found and nurture their own peculiar tradition, nor native philosophic “isms.” We search for the original contributions of our countries in answer to the Western challenge—or to that of other cultures—and we do not find it. At least we find nothing substantial, worthy of a positive historical appraisal. No one, I believe, can give testimony to its existence if he is moderately strict in his judgment.

The characteristics which, according to this balance, stand out in boldest relief in Hispanic American thought are the following:

1. *Imitative sense of thought.* Thinking is done according to theoretical molds already shaped in the pattern of Western thought—mainly European—, imported in the form of currents, schools, and systems totally defined in their content and orientation. To philosophize is to adopt a pre-existent foreign “ism,” to incorporate into one’s thought theses adopted during the process of reading, and to repeat more or less faithfully the works of the most resounding figures of the period.

2. *Universal receptivity.* An indiscriminate disposition to accept all manner of theoretical product coming from the most diverse schools and national traditions, with extremely varied styles and spiritual purposes. This, of course, always providing that they will have obtained a certain reputation, a perceptible ascendancy in some important country of Europe. This receptivity, which betrays a lack of substance in ideas and convictions, has often been taken for [a] Hispanic American virtue.

3. *Absence of a characteristic, definitive tendency,* and of an ideological, conceptual proclivity capable of founding a tradition of thought, of sketching a profile in an intellectual manner. Notice the “empiricist” seal that Britannic thought has, perceptible even in the work of its speculative idealists. There is no solid basis upon which to define a similar style in Hispanic American philosophy. At times one speaks of a practical inclination in the Hispanic American, at others, of a speculative vein. Apart from the fact that these two traits are contradictory, their manifestations—weak and confusing—have disappeared rapidly and almost completely each time that contrary influences have prevailed. The only alternative is to count as a distinctive character precisely the absence of definition and the nebulous state of conceptions, which is merely to confirm the thesis.

4. *Correlative absence of original contributions,* capable of being incorporated into the tradition of world thought. There is no philosophic system of Hispanic American roots, or doctrine with meaning in the

entirety of universal thought. Neither are there polemic reactions to the affirmations of our thinkers, nor sequels and doctrinary effects of them in other philosophies. All of this is an additional proof of the inexistence of our own ideas and theses. The most relevant philosophical figures of Hispanic America have been commentators or professors, but, no matter how fruitful their action in this field may have been for the educational process of our countries, it has not had an effect beyond our own cultural circle.

5. *Existence of a strong sense of intellectual frustration* among cultivators of philosophy. It is symptomatic that, throughout the history of our culture, its most lucid interpreters have planted time and again the question of the existence of their own philosophic thought. Responding to it, as we said, almost unanimously with a complete negation, they have formulated projects for the future construction of such thought. Significantly, this unrest and reflection are not found, or are rarely found, among those nations that have made fundamental contributions to the development of philosophy. They are, so to speak, well installed in the territory of philosophic theory and move within it as in their own dominion. Hispanic Americans, on the other hand, have always, in this regard, felt themselves to be in alien territory, as one who makes furtive and clandestine incursions, for they have had 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.* There is no way to consider our philosophies as national thought, with a differential seal, as one speaks of a German, French, English, or Greek philosophy. It is also impossible for the community to recognize itself in these philosophies, precisely because we are dealing with transplanted thought, the spiritual products of other men and other cultures, which a refined minority makes an effort to understand and to share. We do not deny that there is a universal factor in philosophy, nor do we think that philosophy has to be popular. However, when an elaborate intellectual creation is genuine, it reflects the conscience of a community finding in it profound resonance especially through its ethical and political derivations.

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,* often far removed physically and socially from each other as is the case of Hispanic America. Not only does it permit a general judgment of Hispanic American thought—without ignoring the existence of special cases and regional variants resulting from divergent influences within the common framework—it also demonstrates that in order to comprehend the thought of our countries it is necessary to define the basic cultural-historical reality that links them beneath their nearly always artificial confrontations and political separations.

III

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 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." In another place, confronted with the existence of systems that pretend to reproduce doctrines of the past, that is, to make a kind of transfer from one mode of thinking to another, he formulated this bitter disqualification: "These attempts are simple translations, not original creations; and the spirit only finds satisfaction in the knowledge of its own and genuine originality." With this the great master of the history of philosophy underscored a very important fact in the dominion of thought. To wit, philosophy as such expresses the life of the community, but it can fail in this function, and, instead of manifesting its uniqueness, it can detract from it or conceal it. Accordingly, an unauthentic philosophy, or a mystified thought may develop.

To what extent a philosophy can be unauthentic will be made clear in an attempt to specify the purpose and meaning of philosophic thought. As we understand it, a philosophy is many things, but among them it cannot fail to be the manifestation of the rational conscience of a community. It is the conception that expresses the mode in which the community reacts before the whole of reality and the course of existence, and its peculiar manner of illuminating and interpreting the being in which it finds itself installed. Because it comprises the whole of reality, it deals with that which is essential to man, with his vital commitment. In this respect it differs from science which does not commit the whole man. On the other hand, to the extent that philosophy is a rational conscience, an attempt to make the world and life intelligible, it is not confused with religious faith which operates through feeling and suggestion. Thus, 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. The latter are the two means of referring to that which is most unique in each man.

But philosophy can be unauthentic, as we have seen. How does this happen? Man constructs his self image as an individual and as a social entity; he is, in the words of Ortega, the novelist of himself. But he may be that as an original writer or as a plagiarist; as someone who portrays himself, outlining his genuine idea, or as someone who is self-deluding, "getting ideas" about himself, and takes another's as his own image. And so, thinking that he knows himself, he remains ignorant. A philosophy can be this illusory image of itself, the mystified representation of a community, through which the community "gets ideas"—real ideas—about itself and loses itself as a truthful conscience. This happens 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. At times they may even be contrary to the values of other communities. He who assumes this imitated thought thinks he sees himself expressed in it and in fact makes an effort to live it as his own, but he almost never finds himself in it. The illusion and unauthenticity that prevail in this case are paid for with sterility, and sterility, which betrays a vital defect, is always a risk for collective and individual life.

This anthropological illusion has, nevertheless, a truthful side. The man of mystified conscience expresses through this conscience his own defects and deficiencies. If a community adopts foreign ideas and values, if it cannot give them life and empower them, but instead imitates them in their foreign character, it is because alienating and deficient elements prevail in its being. An illusory self-concept is only possible to the degree that there is no self-fulfillment, at least in certain very important sectors of historical existence. On this point it is, then, inexact—although not false—to deny the veracity of unauthentic philosophies. It is more exact to say that they lie about the being that assumes them, but by lying they reveal their defective existence. They fail in not offering a proper image of reality as it ought to be, but they succeed, unwittingly, as an expression of the lack of a complete and original being.

Because of scientific demands of precision and objectivity, when one speaks of culture in social science, one usually means by the term a unique and neutral concept. Although this use has permitted the empirical manipulation of social life and the generalization of explanations, it is, nevertheless, insufficient. I believe that this science is now in a position to consider as positive data and to elaborate theoretically the facts concerning the unauthenticity and alienation of society and culture. Marxism and psychoanalysis, empirically controlled, can make very valuable suggestions in this respect. I say this because to me it seems impossible to comprehend human life without distinguishing historical deficiencies and plenitudes, the accomplishments and alienations of communities and the individuals that constitute them, all of which obliges us to diversity concepts. In this respect, I think that it behooves us to wield 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—. We reserve other meanings and other concepts, such as those of mode of working, mode of proceedings, or manner of reacting to other parallel phenomena. These concepts, unlike that of culture, would be applicable to any social group, even if such a group did not achieve cultural originality and maturity in the strict sense of the word. It then is necessary to include in anthropological terminology, at the social and cultural level, the concepts

of frustration, alienation, authenticity, and mystification, without which the multiple variety of historical existence cannot be comprehended, as we are proving in the case of Hispanic American philosophy.

IV

In Hispanic America a defect of culture may be observed. Hispanic American philosophic thought—and all other thought of similar explanatory purposes—offers that stamp of negativity to which we have been referring in speaking of philosophies as illusory self-conscience. Because of its imitative nature across the centuries, until today it has been an alienated and alienating conscience that has given a superficial image of the world and life to man in our national communities. It has not truly responded to motivations felt by this man, but rather has responded to the goals and vital interests of other men. It has been a plagiarized novel and not the truthful chronicle of our human adventure.

As we have indicated earlier, there is a consensus among the interpreters of Hispanic American thought and culture regarding the existence of a problem that affects its meaning and function. The demonstration of this problematic situation in its applicability to philosophy has suggested various attempts at explanation that should be recalled and examined, even if it is only by way of a very brief résumé.

1. A first reaction is to evaluate Hispanic American thought, such as it is, positively, while disregarding its negative aspects or interpreting them by a kind of sublimation as original forms, different from ordinary philosophic thought, but valuable in themselves as spiritual creations. One may exalt, for example, the universalism of our thought, which is the optimistic reverse of the limitless receptivity that we mentioned earlier, or the disguise that conceals a weakness of theoretical reflection. A kind of autochthonism joins hands here with a conformist conscience in order to see in deficiency or weakness an original mode of philosophizing. It forgets that our thought has proved that it cannot live without external sustenance, and that it is incapable of making its personality felt, for example, by provoking polemic reactions or determining influences that might prolong and enrich it, in the course of world thought.

2. Although close to the preceding, a second attitude has a rather negative cast. Those who adopt it recognize that there is no vigorous and creative philosophy in Hispanic America, and they explain this fact appealing generally to ethnic causes. It is said, for example, that this situation is the effect of our mentality, that our race does not have a philosophic disposition. It is held that philosophy does not harmonize with the genius of our people, which is better endowed for other spiritual creations. The thesis generally

presupposes the existence of a vigorous body of values and genuine cultural products different from the philosophic, of which there is, of course, no proof. This opinion cannot long resist the confrontation with well-known facts that demonstrate that deficiencies and unauthenticity reach other very important fields, and even cover the entire gambit of culture.

3. A third explanation appeals to the historical cultural youth of our peoples. It is thought that four hundred years of evolution, without counting the process of previous civilizations, are not sufficient to acclimate philosophy, and that one should reasonably expect a perceptible change in this aspect when the Hispanic American community achieves the maturity that it is lacking today. It is forgotten in this context that other "younger" peoples with a less-aged intellectual tradition, as is patently the case with the United States, have indeed managed to create a philosophic thought of their own.

4. Another explanation approaches a position of greater historical realism, although in my opinion it does not touch the most decisive factors. It appeals to the precariousness of institutional conditions and of the necessary social means for the development and advance of genuine theoretical thought. In this case we are considering mainly the coordinated professional and academic organization that encourages the cultivation of philosophy as a university specialty, along with the varied professional activities of Hispanic American thinkers. This allows for the hope of a favorable evolution in view of the fact that in our time a normality has been achieved in the academic status of philosophic studies. At the base of this explanation there is a very limited and partial idea of the conditions in which philosophy prospers. The latter is regarded as a standardized activity and it is taken for granted that the university atmosphere is rather the natural abode of thought. Aside from the fact that such an idea risks confusing creative philosophers with mere professors of philosophy, it passes over the very significant fact that many of the greatest thinkers did not enjoy the facilities mentioned, nor were they—and more than once they did not wish to be—university professors. Take for example Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, to mention only a few famous names who were dedicated to activities very distinct from that of teaching.

If the explanations that I have reviewed are insufficient or erroneous, as it seems to me that they are, it is necessary to turn to another type of explanatory causes and factors. Broader and more profound, they operate in that sphere of fundamental realities that, in spite of disconnections and separations, lead to a coincidence in their characters and a common evolution of philosophic thought in Hispanic American nations. One must recognize the necessity of seeking in the mode of living of our nations, as social organisms and historical-cultural entities, the causes of the problem that concerns us. A defective and illusory philosophic conscience causes

one to suspect the existence of a defective and unauthentic social being, the lack of a culture in the strong and proper sense of the term as previously defined. This is the case in Hispanic America.

V

Commenting on a book of mine about the history of contemporary ideas in Peru, the young French historian Jean Piel asked, in a paraphrase of Montesquieu's famous sentence, "How can one be Peruvian?" The question is equally applicable to all of Hispanic America, because there is a problem of authenticity in man in this part of the world. Certainly, on the level of simple, natural facts, the question offers no difficulty, and perhaps it is not worth posing. One can be anything from the moment that one is. But when one takes into account all that a historical being as such entails, all that it implies by way of aspirations, plans, norms, and values, besides natural realities, then the question acquires full meaning. It is equivalent to asking about the potential and destiny of an unauthentic existence. Because the truth is that Hispanic Americans live behind a feigned being.

Hence it is that in our communities mystification and fiction prevail. Many institutions have a different design from what they declare, while the majority of ideas acquire a sense that is different from and, as often as not, opposite from the original meaning that they officially possessed. The most varied forms of conduct and interpersonal relationships coincide in functioning and being motivated in a manner contrary to what supposedly corresponds to them. Reflect, for example, on Hispanic American democracy or free enterprise, justice, religion, the University, morality, and it will be seen to what an inversion of being my considerations point. In the last analysis, we live on the conscious level according to models of culture that have no roots in our condition of existence. In the raw material of this historical reality, imitative conduct yields a deformed product which passes itself off as the original model. This model operates as a myth that impedes our recognizing our situation and laying the bases for a genuine building of ourselves. The same kind of mystified awareness leads us, for example, to define ourselves as Westerners, Latins, moderns, democrats, or Catholics. We imply in each one of these cases—through the work of the disguising myths that enjoy free rein in our collective conscience—something different from what in truth exists.

This use of foreign and inadequate patterns, ideas, and values that do not jibe with reality, and reflect a partial or falsified image of our mode of being is what, in the last analysis, Hispanic American philosophy sanctions. Because of the ambivalence of our existence, it sanctions it in a double sense: (a) as the conscious assumption of concepts and norms

without roots in our historical-existential concern; (b) as an imitation of foreign thought, with neither originality nor force. Hispanic American philosophy sanctions unauthenticity in our culture by presenting itself in its ideas and values—whose purpose is to illuminate life—as a product that ignores reality and alienates the spirit.

It is not strange that a community which is disintegrated and lacking in potential should produce a mystified philosophic awareness. Philosophy, which in an integral culture is the highest form of consciousness, cannot help but be an artificial and insubstantial expression in a defective culture. It cannot help but be a thought alien to the living body of history, foreign and alienating in principle to the destiny of the men in whose community it is nourished.

VI

Where is the cause, the determining complex of this condition of Hispanic America as an entity and also of each of its constituent nations? If we are aware that this condition is not peculiar to Hispanic American countries, but is largely similar to that of other communities and regional groups of nations, belonging to what today is called the Third World, then it is clear that, to explain it, we must utilize the concept of underdevelopment, with the correlative concept of domination. In fact, underdeveloped countries present an aggregate of basically negative characteristics which, one way or the other, are related to dependent bonds with other centers of economic and political power. These centers of power—which direct the activities of the dependent countries according to their own interests—are situated in the developed nations, in the mother countries, or in great industrial powers. And these negative characteristics correspond to factors which easily explain the phenomena of a culture like that of Hispanic America. It was not by accident that our countries were first subject to Spanish power and that they evolved from this situation as Spanish political colonies to that of factories and supply centers or markets of the British Empire, subject to their economic control. The United States inherited this empire, with a closer and more effective network of power. As dependents of Spain, England, or the United States, we have been and continue to be underdeveloped—if I may use the expression—*under* these powers, and, consequently, countries with a *culture of domination*.

I am giving here the broader traits of the conditions and global references to the phenomenon of the underdevelopment and domination of Hispanic America. I prefer to remain on this level so as better to call attention to the basic fact of our culture. One could object, no doubt, to the simplicity of the explanation. I believe that it could be shaded consider-

ably without varying the substance of the thesis: but I fear that the trees of the shading might not permit us to see the forest of the basic cause; I fear that the refined pluralism of the explanation might distract us from the original comprehension. Therefore, I insist that the decisive factor in our Hispanic American case is underdevelopment, the dependency and bonds of domination, with the peculiar qualities that allow us to define it as [a] historical phenomenon.

The sociocultural effect of this state of things is that misshapen society and defective culture that philosophy reveals. Let us remember that our philosophy was originally a thought imposed by the European conqueror in accord with the interests of the Spanish Crown and Church. It has since been a thought of the upper class or of a refined oligarchical elite, when it has not corresponded openly to waves of foreign economic and political influence. In all these cases underdevelopment and domination are influential. On the other hand, the qualities that we indicated in describing our thought not only fail to contradict this explanation through underdevelopment, but instead harmonize fully with it. The dominated countries live with a view to the outside, depending in their existence upon the decisions of the dominant powers, that cover all fields. This trait is not alien to the receptivity and the imitative character of the philosophy—and not only the philosophy—that is typical of Hispanic America. Likewise, these countries lack vigor and dynamism because of their depressed economy and because of the lack of cohesion in their society that underdevelopment creates. Thus, there is no distinctive cast of thought that could neutralize this receptivity and this tendency toward imitation. Nor can the entirety of spiritual products achieve the necessary vigor to inject themselves as original contributions in the worldwide advance of civilization. The distance between those who practice philosophy and the community at large is in this case—unlike the normal relationship between the specialist and the public—the abyss between the enlightened elite who live according to a foreign model, and the illiterate, poverty-stricken masses, trapped in the framework of remote and sclerotic traditions. And the frustration is rooted in the impossibility of living according to foreign cultural patterns, while experiencing the simultaneous incapacity to make the life of the community fruitful in thought. As we have seen, this situation is common to Hispanic America in the same measure that underdevelopment is common, and with it, dependence and domination.

VII

Our thought is defective and unauthentic owing to our society and our culture. Must it necessarily remain so? Is there no alternative to this

prospect? That is to say, is there no way of giving it originality and authenticity? Indeed there is, because man, in certain circumstances rises above his present condition, and transcends in reality toward new forms of life, toward unheard-of manifestations. These will endure or will bear fruit to the degree that the initiated movement can expand and provoke a general dialectic and totalization of development. In the sociopolitical field this is what constitutes revolutions. This means that that part of man which rises above his circumstances cannot do so fruitfully and in a lasting manner unless the movement is capable of articulating itself with the rest of reality and provoking in it an overall change. If this is valid for society and culture in general, it is also true of philosophy, for the latter, being the focus of man's total awareness, could, better than other spiritual creations, be that part of humanity that rises above itself, and overcomes the negativity of the present as it moves toward new and superior forms of reality. But, to achieve this, it must possess certain valences capable of turning theory into live reality. It must operate in such a way that, through an effective and prudent utilization of historical resources, it will produce the most fruitful dialectical reactions in the proper areas of social life. Hegel said that the owl of Minerva took flight at dusk, thus giving philosophy the character of a theory that elucidates the meaning of facts already accomplished. It is not always so. Contrary to what Hegel thought, we feel that philosophy can be, and on more than one historic occasion has had to be, the messenger of the dawn, the beginning of historic change through a radical awareness of existence projected toward the future.

Philosophy in Hispanic America has a possibility of being authentic in the midst of the unauthenticity that surrounds and consumes it, and to convert itself into the lucid awareness of this condition and into the thought capable of unleashing the process to overcome it. It must be a meditation *about* our anthropological status and *from* our own negative status, with a view to its cancellation. Consequently, Hispanic American philosophy has before it—as a possibility of its own recuperation—a destructive task that, in the long run, will be destructive to its current form. It must be an awareness that cancels prejudice, myths, idols; an awareness that will awaken us to our subjection as peoples and our depression as men. In consequence, it must be an awareness that liberates us from the obstacles that impede our anthropological expansion, which is also the anthropological expansion of the world. It must be, in addition, a critical and analytical awareness of the potentialities and demands of our affirmation as humanity. All of which requires a thought that from the beginning will cast aside every deceptive illusion and, delving into the historical substance of our community, will search for the qualities and values that could express it 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.

I believe it necessary to call attention to the fact that I am not postulating the necessity of *practical, applied, or sociological* philosophy, as has been proposed more than once as a model of Hispanic American thought. It has been suggested, even by outstanding figures of our culture, that in the distribution of philosophical tasks, theory should belong to Europe and application to Hispanic America. I am convinced also, however, that the strict theoretical character, which is the highest contemplative requirement indispensable to all fruitful philosophy, is merely another way of condemning ourselves to dependency and subjection. In philosophy, as in science, only he who has the key to theory can appropriate the advances and powers of civilization. Our philosophy should be, then, both theory and application, conceived and executed in our own fashion, according to our own standards and qualities. Just as science, which in spite of its declared objectivity, tolerates, particularly in the social disciplines, an ingredient of interpretation and ideology, so too should philosophy be elaborated by us as theory according to our own standards and applied in accord with our own ends.

Consequently, those who heed the call of reflexive thought in Hispanic America cannot dispense with the acquisition of the techniques developed by philosophy in its long history, nor can they cast aside all those concepts capable of serving as support for a rigorous theory. At the cost of laborious efforts they must appropriate all these products, all the more difficult to acquire without the support of a solid national cultural base. But all the while they must keep in mind their provisional and instrumental character, and not take them as models and contents to be imitated and repeated as if they were absolute. Rather, they must be taken as tools to be utilized as long as there are no others more effective and more adequate to the discovery and expression of our anthropological essence.

This is the task that we have ahead of us. In some cases it would be impossible to fulfill its goals completely, but we must aim toward them with the awareness that the difficulty increases daily through the dynamics of world history. In the great field of international competition, the differences between the underdeveloped and developed countries, the proletarian and industrialized countries, are ever more pronounced. The subjection of the former to the latter is, therefore, increasingly stronger and more permanent. Likewise, the alienation of being becomes more serious in the dominated nations, among which the Hispanic American countries must be counted. But there is still the possibility of liberation. While this is so, we are obligated to choose a line of action that will materialize this possibility. Philosophy also has this option.