



Hegel's Haunt of Hispanic American Philosophy: The Case of Augusto Salazar Bondy

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I

Those involved in comparative philosophy in the late twentieth century and who engage what is called "Latin American" or "Hispanic American" philosophy find in a reflective thinker such as the Peruvian Augusto Salazar Bondy one who seeks that which is uniquely Latin American or Hispanic American in the thought that issues from the continent. Presumably, only that thinking which is unique to the Latin American establishes a philosophical *identity*, thereby also and at once a philosophical *difference* with what is Western/European/Occidental. For one such as Bondy, Latin American or Hispanic American philosophy fails in its essential function if it does not speak to the clarification of this identity and this difference. His argument is more or less the following: If a community's philosophy is constructed as an *imitated* thought, then it loses itself as a truthful conscience, i.e., it succumbs to self-delusion—in other words, while thinking it knows itself in fact it remains ignorant of itself. Hispanic America's philosophy is constructed as an imitated thought. Therefore, Hispanic America succumbs to self-delusion—thinking he knows himself as Hispanic American, he in fact remains ignorant of what it really means to be Hispanic American.

Salazar Bondy articulates what has become a common theme among 20th century Latin American philosophers seeking to discern the basic features of their thought as a "philosophy of existence," i.e., a philosophy that discloses what is unique to the Latin American existence. This quest, however, is nothing if it is not motivated by a reading of Hegel's philosophy of history that is then appropriated, mostly uncritically, and applied to the Latin American context of philosophical discourse. Salazar Bondy, for example, cites Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, wherein Hegel writes: "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."¹ Salazar Bondy accepts it as empirically true that philosophy is indeed "the philosophy of its time" ever satisfying only "the peculiar interests of its time." Hegel's claim is thereby *architectonic* for Salazar Bondy—it is methodologically determinative, configuring Salazar Bondy's hermeneutic approach to "the problem" of Latin American philosophy. The conditional proposition is thereby stated with immediate inference from the architectonic claim: If there is such a thing as Latin American philosophy, it cannot but be the philosophy of its time; if there is such a thing as Latin American philosophy, it cannot but satisfy only the peculiar interests of its time.

The problem, however, is to know whether the antecedent denotes. That is, it remains unclear whether there is something that we can call "Latin American" or "Hispanic American" philosophy. The problem of denotation, the question of reference

¹ Salazar Bondy cites this passage in his work, *Sentido y Problema del Pensamiento Filosófico Hispanoamericano*, translated as *The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought*, ed. John P. Augelli (Lawrence: Center of Latin American Studies of the University of Kansas, 1969).

for the term, is inseparable from—in this case—Salazar Bondy’s survey of this domain of discourse. For Salazar Bondy, what we call Hispanic American philosophy has its explicit beginning in the sixteenth century, coincident to Spanish colonization and the Christian (Roman Catholic) mission to the new world. It begins subject to the conceptual framework of Spanish scholasticism (e.g., that of Francisco Suarez) and transits through the same doctrinal changes experienced in Europe via Renaissance and Enlightenment thought, ideological disputes among conservatives and liberals as well as utopian socialists and anarchists, social Darwinists, and positivists until a new breed of Hispanic American thinkers feels “impulses to self-criticism” and dedicate themselves to “giving a new meaning and a profounder and more authentic basis to the culture of [the Latin American] countries.”²

With this impulse to self-criticism the problem of philosophical identity and difference is isolated and rendered the singular expression of an unavoidable self-examination. Self-examination has as its consequence a manifest critique that un.masks what passes for Hispanic American philosophy, exposing it as something “unauthentic.” In a word: There is no authentic Hispanic American philosophy as of the turn of the 20th century. As Bondy states it: “...as a result of all previous history...we are conscious (perhaps for the first time fully conscious) of the problems that affect our thought, or, better said, the radical problem of authenticity and justification for our philosophizing.”³ So long as Hispanic American thought merely imitates the conceptual systems of European culture and uncritically adopts such systems, it lacks the requisite justification to philosophize. It shows itself justified only if and when it is *expressive of* and *responsive to* the uniquely Latin American spirit, i.e., the spirit of the Latin American people that realizes itself in the world as a rational existence.

Hispanic American thinkers such as Salazar Bondy see themselves in quest of a solution to a radical problem, radical in the strict sense of a problem of roots and rootedness, i.e., the problem of identifying the roots of a Latin American philosophy that is thoroughly distinguished from the European and letting that philosophy emerge and configure it from those roots. Accordingly, they speak of “authenticity,” drawing attention with that word to what properly belongs to the Latin American, to what is of Latin American origin, to what is “ownmost” in their thought. The concept of authenticity, of course, reminds of the philosophical discourse of an existential phenomenologist such as the early Heidegger and then the derivative existentialist thought of one such as Sartre. And here, in this concept of authenticity, we have an uncritically appropriated concept that somehow has legitimacy for the Hispanic American philosopher that other “Eurogonous” concepts do not have.

This uncritical appropriation of the concept of authenticity is subject to contestation by anyone seeking to identify what is properly Latin American in contrast to what is properly Eurogonous. It is fair to ask the *quid jure* question: With what right does the Hispanic American philosopher speak of an authenticity that is presumed to correspond to the Latin American and that differentiates the Latin American from the European? But, even so, there is a prior conceptual contestation that must be engaged, even as this contestation discerns in the Heideggerian lexicon a derivative influence: viz., the Hegelian system of logic, the Hegelian philosophy of history.

This system visibly yet invisibly informs the methodological configuration of thinkers such as Salazar Bondy so as to manifest what is paradoxical in their quest. Seeking liberation from the European so as to speak an original discourse, at no time

² Augusto Salazar Bondy, “The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Philosophic Thought,” in Jorge J. E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, eds., *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), pp. 381-398, at p. 384.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 387

do Hispanic American thinkers such as Salazar Bondy challenge the validity of the Hegelian system. For them, “the real” in Latin America is “rational” and “the rational” in Latin America is “real”—there is a Latin American “existence,” and it is a “rational existence” that distinguishes itself from the European not by being less rational but by being rational “in its own way,” which is to say “authentically.” In short, the Latin American, too, participates in the movement of “the World Spirit,” shares in “*the essential destiny of Reason*” that is displayed in “the form of *concrete reality*” that is Latin America. Latin America, too, shares in what Hegel called “the World of intelligence and conscious volition,” thus is “not abandoned to chance,” such that it is incumbent upon us (i.e., upon those among Hispanic American thinkers who are good Hegelians) to discern what reason reveals of itself in the peoples, the states, that are Latin American, thus in the particular “freedom” that the Latin American actualizes thereby. To seek a uniquely *Latin American* philosophy, then, is to seek to articulate a discourse that discloses how the Latin American, *conscious of his own being*, depends upon himself alone for his existence, thereby *realizing himself*, manifesting *his own personality* in contrast to the mere imitation of that which is other—in contrast, that is, to what Salazar Bondy calls the “regularized” philosophy of Hispanic America that is none other than Western philosophy *passing through* Hispanic America.

If Hispanic American or Latin American philosophy represents a *possibility* today, in Hegelian terms it is a possibility such as Salazar Bondy conceives it only because that which is possibility “points to something destined to become actual.”⁴ Latin American philosophy *qua* possibility becomes actual only if it attains to a self-consciousness, breaking through the European philosophy that is “alien to it” and thus, attaining “to itself,” realizes itself in the will and action of the Latin American philosopher who is *no longer European* in will or action. That, of course, is a Hegelian claim, but a claim nonetheless that operates tacitly if not explicitly in the analysis that Salazar Bondy manifests in his insistent quest for authenticity.

Hegel held that philosophy “must make its appearance where political life exists.”⁵ But a true philosophy for Hegel is one that involves “the interest of Reason”—and that is none other than “consciousness of the Idea of Freedom, and its expression in individuals.” A genuinely Latin American philosophy, then, is genuine only to the degree that it manifests its “substantial importance,” conveying in its subject-matter the interest of Reason, attending to freedom, Latin American philosophy showing itself thereby “a unity synonymous with Spirit.”⁶ The problem with Chinese and Indian philosophy, Hegel declared, was that both nations were “*entirely wanting* in the essential consciousness of the Idea of Freedom...Freedom, through which alone the essential, determinations of Reason become moral sentiments, is wanting.”⁷ The same would be “problematic” of that which is called Latin American philosophy even in our day if, in making the transition from the European imitation to the philosophical self-consciousness that Salazar Bondy seeks, this thought did not concern itself with what is universal in it through that essential consciousness while yet engaged in an act of “self-production” that discloses “the concrete spirit of a people.”

It is no wonder, then, that Salazar Bondy asserts that, “philosophy as such expresses the life of the community...manifesting its uniqueness,” while warning that philosophy “can fail in this function,” can “detract from it or conceal it,” manifesting instead “an unauthentic philosophy” or “a mystified thought” that is, in a word,

⁴ G.F.W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, §64 [online version: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/hiconten.htm>; accessed 17 October 2006]

⁵ *Ibid.*, §77

⁶ *Ibid.*, §78

⁷ *Ibid.*, §79

“anthropological illusion.”⁸ Latin American philosophy remains unauthentic, so claims Salazar Bondy, if it is not in its substance “the total truth of a rationally clarified existence,” a clarification that identifies for the Latin American his “anthropological essence.” If Hispanic American philosophy is merely the regularized performance of a discourse that works with European concepts and categories, that philosophy reveals the “defective existence” of the Hispanic American, including the philosopher who presumes to clarify that existence. Salazar Bondy puts it this way: “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.”⁹ The conditional proposition so stated begs for completion of the intended argument. One completes it in the case of Hispanic American philosophy (at least at the time Salazar Bondy writes) by premising the affirmative of the antecedent for Latin America and then affirming the consequent: The Latin American is undermined in his being, in his historical existence, by those “alienating” and “deficient” elements that are presented in foreign ideas and values “plagiarized” from Europe.

But what does this tell us about the one who provides this diagnosis of the state of Hispanic American philosophy and the state of being of the Latin American? Are we not to say, as Salazar Bondy himself said, that, “a defective and illusory philosophic conscience causes one to suspect the existence of a defective and unauthentic social being...?”¹⁰ To be transparent: Must one not move to indict and say that *it is the defective and illusory philosophic conscience of thinkers such as Salazar Bondy* that causes us to suspect the existence of a defective and unauthentic social being in Latin America?

If we follow Salazar Bondy in his interpretive mode, then we cannot but state the indictment. But, to indict Salazar Bondy and others like him among Hispanic American philosophers is to show us steeped uncritically in the Hegelian frame of reference that makes such an indictment meaningful and possible. The fact is that it makes no sense to indict without first of all evaluating the admissibility of the evidence adduced. Salazar Bondy may insist, as he does, that underdevelopment and its attendant “dependency and bonds of domination” are “the decisive factor” causally sustaining that defective and unauthentic social being that prevails throughout Latin America. But he thereby shifts his focus from the level of hermeneutic engagement to the level of empirical assessment. Dependency and domination are relevant factors in the underdevelopment of Latin America, of course. But, if one insists that Latin America suffers a defective existence such that its philosophy is unauthentic, then the question of evidence has to be engaged not at the level of the empirical but at the level of hermeneutic engagement. And, that evidentiary assessment discloses what is decisive here, viz., that Salazar Bondy remains fundamentally Hegelian in his analysis and in his conclusions.

He disagrees with Hegel, of course, in the latter’s claim that the owl of Minerva takes its flight at dusk, “giving philosophy the character of a theory that elucidates the meaning of facts already accomplished.” *It is not always so*, asserts Salazar Bondy, and not so in the case of Hispanic American philosophy in quest of originality and authenticity: “Contrary to what Hegel thought,” he says, “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.”¹¹ But the image betrays a more fundamental domination and

⁸ Salazar Bondy, in Gracia, p. 390

⁹ Ibid., p. 391

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 393-394

¹¹ Ibid., p. 397

dependency, what I call here “Hegel’s haunt” of Salazar Bondy and others like him who seemingly “discovers” a radical problem of authenticity in Latin America. Take away the Hegelian frame and ask: What is there before us in the Latin American existence and in the Latin American philosophy? Is it indeed such that, absent the Hegelian frame, we *discover* throughout Latin America a defective and illusory philosophic conscience that is in reciprocal relation to a defective and unauthentic social being? Or, *deconstructing* the Hegelian architectonic structure of Salazar Bondy’s analysis, might we not find, instead, a *projection* rather than a discovery? If indeed it is projection, then willy-nilly those who insist on a radical problem of authenticity, on a defective and illusory philosophic conscience, on a defective and unauthentic social being, *mis-identify* and *mis-construe*, and so *mis-direct* the Latin American philosopher in her tasks as she works to disclose both the actuality and the possibility of Latin American historical existence.

II

‘Philosophical identity’ has become something of a watchword of philosophical discourse among Latin American philosophers. It speaks to a central preoccupation insofar as the actuality and possibility of Latin American *philosophy* is linked causally to the actuality and possibility of Latin American *culture*. When Salazar Bondy speaks of culture he posits a specific meaning: “the organic articulation of the original and differentiating mechanisms of a community.” Thereby, his concept links to the metaphor of roots, roots that are the origin of individuality and differentiation, in this case the individuality of the Latin American *per se* differentiated from the European *per se*. Yet, this appeal to origin is dependent on a prior phenomenological commitment, and that is a commitment to a concept of anthropological essence such that Salazar Bondy could thereafter distinguish between anthropological *essence* and anthropological *illusion*.

The former speaks of the Hegelian conception of acknowledgement and recognition that belong to self-consciousness; the latter asserts both a lack of acknowledgement and a failure of recognition. Salazar Bondy’s desire for a clarification of the Latin American historical existence as a rational conscience presupposes the Hegelian concept of a self-consciousness that is a “self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself” and in that way “being-for-itself.”¹² As Hegel speaks of a self-consciousness in relation to an “external other,” itself an externality that is to be *anceled* in the interest of self-acknowledgement and self-recognition, so Salazar Bondy calls the Hispanic American to a “meditation” *about* his “anthropological status” and *from* his own “negative status, with a view to its cancellation,”¹³ thus to overcome a 400-year history of “universal receptivity” to foreign ideas and values (consequent to an upper class elitism inclined to “immediate preferences and momentary affinities”).

But, there is a problem of application here even if one accepts the Hegelian architecture as it ostensibly applies to the philosophical project of the Latin American. Hegel claims that a self-consciousness “is something definite, it only has a real existence, so far as it alienates itself from itself.”¹⁴ A self-conscious Hispanic American thought manifests its reality, then, only insofar as it experiences this self-alienation. Why so? Hegel answers in a way that is significant for the project that is Latin American philosophy in its relation to European philosophy: By alienating itself, one expects Hegel would say, Latin American philosophy “puts itself in the position of

¹² G.F.W. Hegel, “The Phenomenology of Spirit,” in Carl J. Friedrich, ed. *The Philosophy of Hegel* (New York: Modern Library, 1953/1954), p. 401

¹³ Salazar Bondy, *op. cit.*, p. 397

¹⁴ Hegel, “The Phenomenology of Spirit,” p. 434

something universal, and this its universality actualizes it, establishes it objectively, makes it valid." The key word here is that of 'validity'. Latin American philosophy's claim *to be philosophy* "rests on it having made itself, by that mediating process of self-alienation, *conform to what is universal*" [italics added], and this universality, says Hegel, is "one that has undergone development, and for that reason it is concrete and actual."¹⁵ On this line of reasoning, Latin American philosophy cannot *be* philosophy unless it is at once *objectively valid* and *concretely actual*, precisely because this is "the formative process of culture," the formative process even of *Latin American culture* that is so critical to Salazar Bondy's sense of identity manifest as anthropological essence.

Salazar Bondy's concern to illuminate a unique Latin American culture is not without its historical determinants. In his contribution to the Second Inter-American Congress of Philosophy, for example, F.S.C. Northrop engaged the theme of the philosophy of culture and its bearing on the philosophy of history.¹⁶ Latin America, he observed, contrasts to a country such as the USA, which "since its achievement of independence in 1776, has been dominated predominantly by one constant ideology derived primarily from British culture."¹⁷ Citing the example of Mexico in its development especially since "her democratic revolution in 1810," Northrop identifies her struggle with "conflicting ideologies in her internal domestic politics"—"a basic pre-Spanish Indian culture, a Spanish Roman Catholic culture..., a Lockean and Voltairean democratic culture..., a French and British positivistic culture..., and finally a democratic political combined with an economic communist culture..."¹⁸ One expects that the problem of strategy and tactics in ideological conflict in Mexico is the same for the rest of Latin America such that Salazar Bondy points to a fundamental problem for philosophy. Northrop illustrates the problem in sharp outline:

The Mexicans, like other Latin Americans, soon learned that if, in the economic, political educational, religious, and artistic spheres, the representatives of the two groups found themselves differing on the economic, political, educational, or esthetic principles to be used to define their cultural institutions, it did no good to attempt to resolve the differences on the level of economic, political, educational, or esthetic theory. Grant a Roman Catholic leader his Thomistic philosophical premises and one can hardly expect to convince him of the wisdom of a secular education and of the outlawing of parochial schools for religious instruction. Allow communists similarly their Marxist philosophical assumptions and it is not only futile but unreasonable to attempt to disabuse them of the specific theories of economic and political organization which that philosophy entails. Considerations such as these made evident to the Mexicans and other Latin Americans the necessity of tracing the different economic and political doctrines back to the philosophical premises from which they stem and then to fighting the issue out at this more basic philosophical level of primitive assumptions rather than at the secondary or logically derived level of educational, economic, political, or theological theorems.¹⁹

Hence, we can appreciate Salazar Bondy's insistence on a clarification of the Latin American historical existence as a philosophical task and specifically the task of the Hispanic American philosopher. Salazar Bondy's distinction of anthropological essence and anthropological illusion makes Latin American culture a problem, the latter pointing to a decline, a defect. Thus, as Northrop put it, "when any manifestation

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ F.S.C. Northrop, "The Philosophy of Culture and Its Bearing on the Philosophy of History," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 9, No. 3, March 1949, pp. 568-575

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 568

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 569

of the culture declines, this is evidence of a loss of faith in the underlying philosophical foundations of every manifestation of its culture.”²⁰

A critique such as Salazar Bondy intends projects the installation of a philosophy linked to Latin American culture. But, as Northrop observed, a philosophy of culture is inevitably linked to a philosophy of history; such that, if the one is to be the object of critique so *a fortiori* is the latter. This requires a self-reflection in the case of Salazar Bondy that makes his commitment to the Hegelian architectonic, including the Hegelian philosophy of history, subject to critique even as one may end up vindicating it. Citing such thinkers as Samuel Ramos and Leopoldo Zea, for example, Northrop argues that, “an approach to the philosophy of history through the philosophy of culture unequivocally supports the Hegelian...theory of cultural evolution.” It was Hegel’s “great insight,” says Northrop, “that cultural evolution in the West...goes forward by the logic of negation rather than the logic of identity.”²¹ As one committed to inductive method and empirically illuminated hypotheses, however, Northrop expects accumulated evidence to challenge a philosophical construction such as Hegel’s dialectic in its concrete manifestations: “a study of the philosophy of Western culture shows that dialectic is not an irreducible law of history but an effect instead of the Western scientific and philosophical method of hypothesis in the gaining of trustworthy knowledge”—in which case, “the supposed determinism of Hegel’s dialectical idealism...evaporates.”²²

III

Salazar Bondy is perhaps somewhat selective in his appropriation of Hegel’s thought, since it seems he would not and does not accept an interpretation of Latin American culture in its relation to Hispanic American philosophy such as to see in the latter something positive in the sense of conformity to the universal. He admits that someone may respond to the problem of authenticity and “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.”²³ Thus, he continues, “One may exalt, for example, the universalism of our thought, which is the optimistic reverse of the limitless receptivity [of Hispanic American philosophy in relation to the European philosophy that passes through it].” But, this “reaction” to the problem does not satisfy him: “A kind of autochthonism joins hands here with a conformist conscience,” he observes, “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.”²⁴ For Salazar Bondy such a position is “insufficient or erroneous.”

And here, in this last remark, we see yet another operative Hegelian feature in Salazar Bondy’s thought: Every genuine philosophy contributes to the course of world thought from the vantage of its own rationally clarified existence; and Hispanic American philosophy must do likewise if it is to lay claim to authenticity. This it can do, asserts Salazar Bondy, only if it “overcomes the negativity of the present as it moves

²⁰ Ibid., p. 571

²¹ Ibid., p. 573

²² Ibid., p. 574

²³ Salazar Bondy, in Gracia, p. 392

²⁴ Ibid.

toward new and superior forms of reality.”²⁵ In short, Hispanic American philosophy, as “the highest form of consciousness” in “an integral culture,” must manifest the dialectic of history as the unfolding of world spirit. Salazar Bondy would likely agree with Hegel in his claim that the extent of a culture is the measure of an individual’s reality and power, given that here we have “the transition of determinate individuality to its essential constitution.”²⁶ The Latin American, if Salazar Bondy is correct, remains at best an indeterminate individuality, at worst a defective individuality, yet in either case lacking in the requisite transition to his essential constitution, to his “anthropological essence.”

But Hegel would likely pronounce judgment here, in the moment that the Hispanic American philosopher utters his frustration and confesses a defective social being, reminding him that even as this defect is manifest and recognized. This “cannot mean”—instructs Hegel—“that reason must again give up the culture and development of spiritual conscious life which has been reached, that reason should let extensive riches of its aspects of development sink back into the naïveté of natural emotion, and revert to and approximate the wild condition of the animal consciousness...”²⁷ Surely, Salazar Bondy would concur with that judgment. But, in concurring he would have to be Hegelian by adopting a more intense reflection, such that like Hegel he would say that the individual who does not revert to the wild but sees his defective status “must as spirit return out of its confusion into itself, and win for itself a still higher level of conscious life.” And, hearing that said, concurring therewith, Salazar Bondy as a good Hegelian would also have to concede what seemingly eludes him in his analysis, which Hegel would say thus: “*In point of fact...spirit has already accomplished this result.*” (italics added) “To be conscious of its own distraught and torn condition and to express itself accordingly—this is to pour scornful laughter on its existence, on the confusion pervading the whole and on itself as well: it is at the same time this whole confusion dying away and yet apprehending itself to be doing so.”²⁸ Hegel calls this the “self-apprehending vanity of all reality.” What is needed, then, is a revolution of *spirit*, even before and as condition of all revolution that is *political*: “only by self-consciousness being roused to revolt does it know its own peculiar torn and shattered condition; and *in its knowing this it has in fact risen above that condition*” (italics added).²⁹

IV

In the foregoing discussion one can appreciate the degree to which Salazar Bondy’s analysis of the state of Latin American philosophy is linked to the architecture of Hegel’s thought. The whole of this analysis provides guidance to the Latin American philosopher to the degree that one accepts that architecture as a reasonable configuration of reality in general and of Latin American historical existence in particular, such that one can engage the disclosed radical problem of authenticity. But here we are faced with a deconstructive task that first of all displaces the Hegelian architecture, thereafter to proceed with the task of a phenomenological reconstruction that labors to identify this phenomenon that is Latin American philosophy. This can be accomplished only if one makes explicit one’s hermeneutic commitment, keeping prejudices of conceptual apparatus explicit. In present case there is no more engaging prejudice than that of the concept of authenticity and its corollary, the concept of anthropological essence, as it relates to a community’s historic existence.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 397

²⁶ Hegel, “The Phenomenology of Spirit,” p. 434

²⁷ Ibid., p. 459

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 461

A critical engagement of these concepts cannot but immerse itself in the agon that is now known as the quarrel between post-modernity and modernity. As Kevin Hart remarked recently, “the postmodern has made us uncomfortable with metaphors of the genuine, the integral, the interior, the original, the real, the self-sufficient and the transparent that are coiled inside the word ‘authentic.’”³⁰ Only one who remains philosophically “modernist” ascribes objective validity to the concept of the authentic. One who is postmodern, in contrast, distrusts the word ‘authentic’, says Hart, and so has “long since lost faith in ‘Spirit.’” Still, one might remain post-modern by appealing to the legitimacy of ‘authenticity’ not in the sense adduced by the Hegelian architecture of Spirit but instead in the sense elaborated by Heidegger. Salazar Bondy was surely aware of the existentialist phenomenological work of the early Heidegger even as he was aware of the work of existentialists such as Sartre who continues a concern with authentic existence.

Either way, we have something to learn from a master of philosophical hermeneutics such as Hans Georg-Gadamer in his critical engagement of Heidegger. Any Hegelian-governed critique of Hispanic American philosophy in its relation to European thought work with some concept of intersubjectivity, the concept of authenticity itself meaningful only in a context in which the former is clarified. Gadamer understood Heidegger’s “understanding of the most authentic existential structure of *Dasein*,” according to which “the Other could only show itself in its own existence as a limiting factor.”³¹ But, Gadamer is keen to point out that while “everyone is in principle limited,” nonetheless one must consider why one would experience the encounter with the Other as limitation. As Dave Vessey remarks—with a point that has its merit for any Latin American concerned with the problem of authenticity: “According to Gadamer, other subjects don’t simply mark the limits of our understanding; they are a necessary means for understanding our limits.”³² Applied to the historical encounter of the Hispanic American with the European philosophy that passes through Latin America, we find here not limit but opportunity: “Dialogue is an irreplaceable means for self-understanding.”³³ This means, as Vessey puts it, that authenticity is attained *not* “only by turning away from others and finding the one thing that will definitively individuate us. Instead, authenticity requires turning toward others and engaging others in dialogue.”

While some like Gadamer take issue with Heidegger’s account of authenticity, one familiar with Heidegger’s concern with *authentic* (rather than inauthentic) *solicitude* finds such a turning toward others already present in Heidegger’s account (as in *Being and Time*, 158-159/122). Nikolas Kompridis recognized therein Hegel’s influence, such that “our freedom for self-determination—authenticity, in Heidegger’s vocabulary—is both dependent upon and facilitated by others...[and] based on (implicit or explicit) domination or it can be based on a cooperative realization of authentic freedom.”³⁴ In other words, any meaningful “constitution of authentic, self-determining freedom” presupposes “the ineliminable role of intersubjective accountability.”

³⁰ Kevin Hart, “Geoffrey Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), book review, in *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Summer 2003; online version accessed 21 October 2006 at: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/bmrcf/Summer2003/Hartman.html>

³¹ David Vessey, “Gadamer’s Critique of Heidegger’s Account of Authentic Relations to Others,” at http://www.geocities.com/davevessey/Vessey_Gadamer_Heidegger.htm; accessed on 21 October 2006

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Nikolas Kompridis, “Heidegger’s Challenge and the Future of Critical Theory,” 1997 After Postmodernism Conference, online at http://www.focusing.org/apm_papers/kompridis.html; accessed on 21 October 2006

If the attainment of authentic freedom remains a possibility in the so-called post-modern world of philosophical discourse, then the very idea of anthropological essence such as concerns Salazar Bondy must be examined anew. The foregoing reminder of Heidegger's remarks on authentic solicitude suggests that authenticity remains a viable concept for postmodern philosophy. Examining the concept anew we have first to recognize that the concept is not empirical; it is, if at all meaningful, a transcendental concept, referring to that which governs both *arche*-logically as well as *tele*-logically. It speaks of origination, individuation, differentiation, and determination *qua* achievement; it speaks of what at the level of possibility thereby gives rise to an actuality manifest as this or that historical existence. So it would have to be in the case of Latin American historical existence if it makes sense to speak of a properly Latin American anthropological essence.

But what could that mean if its referent is neither something "pre-Columbian" nor something "European," assuming here of course that it might be meaningful to speak of a "pre-Columbian" anthropological essence even as the concept is understood by some to be meaningful for European historical existence if only in the thought of European philosophers (e.g., Edmund Husserl)? But then, the antecedent asserted in the preceding query is already objectionable given its modernist formulation. To speak of the spirit of a people, such as Salazar Bondy does, is to speak under the guidance of the Hegelian dialectic. To speak of anthropological essence is to be governed by later developments in German philosophy, such as the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl, who differed with Hegel on the concept of essence (*Wesen*). Husserl's concept is useful to consider in trying to make sense of the concept used by Salazar Bondy.

Herbert Marcuse is surely correct to say that, "Husserl defines essence in opposition to the individual, spatio-temporally existing real thing, the 'fact,' object of all empirical sciences", a concept that refers to the domain of "transcendental consciousness."³⁵ 'Essence' is not itself something spatio-temporal. Essence is, instead, an ideal object that has "possible instances."³⁶ Thus, it would seem that a modified concept such as "anthropological" essence would likewise refer to nothing spatio-temporal, though in speaking, say, of an anthropological essence of Latin America one is denoting a possible instance of what is understood as an ideal object.

Yet, perhaps one can speak of 'anthropological essence' as connoting a *species* with individual cases being "realizations" (*realisiert*) of that species.³⁷ Husserl, of course, does allow (via phenomenological method) that, "the elucidation of essence (*Wesenserklärung*) can take place on the basis of a perception or any other kind of representation."³⁸ Thus, all that Salazar Bondy perceives as the facticity of Latin American historical existence serves the task of elucidating its essence if this is the sense of the concept that has merit for him. But, it seems problematic to think that Salazar Bondy has a Husserlian concept of essence in mind; for, as Marcuse points out, "The formal epistemological version of the concept of essence lets facticity subsist

³⁵ Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), excerpt pp. 55-62; available online at <http://www.autodidactproject.org/quote/marcuse5.html>; accessed on 22 October 2006

³⁶ Kevin Mulligan, "Essence and Modality: The Quintessence of Husserl's Theory," online version at <http://www.unige.ch/lettres/philo/enseignants/hm/doc/EssenceModalityQuintessence.pdf>; accessed on 22 October 2006

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

as a self-contained realm 'alongside' the realm of essence. To know it does not involve changing or abolishing any aspect of it, but 'only understanding.'³⁹

Clearly, Salazar Bondy is not content merely to understand—he desires and insists on transforming the Latin American facticity, insists on philosophy's rational clarification of the Latin American existence such that this clarification facilitates and motivates the transition from unauthentic social being to one manifestly authentic. Thus, while Salazar Bondy is concerned with historical existence his philosophy is likewise existential despite the reference to essence. He is not, then, Husserlian in his commitment to the idea of anthropological essence. His motivation is practical, his engagement what Husserl would call "the natural attitude" proper to humanistic science: "He finds himself in a world which surrounds him, which appears now in one way, now in another, into which he gazes and listens; generally speaking, he is practically determined in different ways by this world, and through his praxis he is always giving it a new face."⁴⁰ Thus, observed Husserl, "Man, in humanistic science, is not the subject-matter as an identical reality whose being-in-itself can be determined objectively; rather it is historical man insofar as he acts and holds sway subjectively in his surrounding world."⁴¹ In other words, "humanistic science means taking the world as one's subject matter as the world of the subjectivity which functions for it..."⁴²

Husserl's remarks on humanistic science apply thereby to any philosophical anthropology that is concerned with culture and the determinants of a human community's historical existence. His remarks are instructive as we try to make sense of the concept of anthropological essence, especially in his following question: "...is it not obviously a good and necessary guiding notion that one seek to ground an investigation of factual spirits in their historicity upon an essential knowledge of the spirit (and of the community in which spirits live) and that one proceed from these to create 'exact concepts' and exact, unconditionally valid truths as ideal poles for all spiritual factuality?"⁴³ To answer affirmatively is to commit oneself to phenomenological analysis, to philosophy as transcendental phenomenology (as one option) rather than to the natural/empirical attitude of philosophical anthropology. As Husserl informs us,

In the attitude oriented toward essences we can, beginning with the factual, common world, investigate the essential form of a human surrounding world and [investigate] the essential form of a surrounding world which, in the alteration of surrounding worlds through penetration into alien human civilizations, is ever constituting itself anew; and, assuming the possibility that this process could go on infinitely, we can sketch out the structure of an existing world as world of possible experience, i.e., as emerging through an ongoing process of correction throughout possible transitional surrounding worlds...[We] can orient our attitude toward persons and personal communities; we can orient our attitude toward possible concrete surrounding worlds and the 'true' world which is outlined in them.⁴⁴

It is in this recommendation, I suggest, that Husserl provides guidance to the Hispanic American philosopher whose first task is the clarification of this concept of anthropological essence, without which concept the radical problem of authenticity such as concerns Salazar Bondy would lack meaning.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Edmund Husserl, "Appendix III: The Attitude Natural and the Attitude of Humanistic Science. Naturalism, Dualism, and Psychophysical Psychology," *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 315-334, at p. 321

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 323

⁴² Ibid., p. 326

⁴³ Ibid., p. 327

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 329

The alternative is the continued governance of the Hegelian architecture in Latin American thought. But, this seems no longer tolerable. At least one ranking interpreter of Hegel, Charles Taylor, has argued that, “developments of modern civilization have tended to make Hegel’s synthesis implausible;” even, it is to be noted, as Taylor has expounded Hegel’s thought believing that “Hegel has contributed to the formation of concepts and modes of thought which are indispensable if we are to see our way clear through certain modern problems and dilemmas.”⁴⁵ We who live past the nineteenth century are, as Taylor put it citing Hegel himself, “easily tempted to see history as a ‘slaughter bench...on to which the fortune of peoples, the wisdom of states and the virtue of individuals have been brought to sacrifice’ (VG [*Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*], 80). What [we] may find hard to understand is how Hegel after writing this line could nevertheless still see history as the realization of reason and freedom.”⁴⁶ To put it in Hegelian terms, contemporary humanity can no longer “see history as the unfolding of Spirit. And at the same time he can no longer see nature as the emanation of Spirit.” In short, concludes Taylor, “Hegel’s synthesis cannot command adherents today...” And so it must be likewise for the Latin American, concerned as she is to elucidate her historical existence in the jointure, yet ineradicable tension, of identity and difference through which human freedom is disclosed.

⁴⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 135 & p. xi

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139