

Rethinking the history of early modern philosophy
from Latin American colonial philosophy

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A growing body of scholarship suggests that the traditional account of early modern philosophy in terms of the articulation of three major currents (rationalism, empiricism, and critical philosophy) deserves revision and correction. It has been pointed out that the most simplistic versions of this narrative, which Knud Haakonssen has called the "epistemological paradigm" (2004), have often turned these currents into historiographical clichés that bear little relation to historical reality. While the epistemological paradigm narrative has some accurate aspects, since the problem of knowledge was indeed important to many thinkers of the early modern period, this narrative has left out an important part of the philosophy produced at that time that is worth recovering and making visible. This opens up the possibility of writing new narratives that, on the one hand, have other thematic axes than the well-known one of knowledge, and that, on the other hand, include other authors who are not canonical today, and even other works by authors who are already canonized.

There are many ways to rewrite this history, and none of them is comprehensive enough. In "Of Rigor in Science," Jorge Luis Borges tells of a map of an empire that was the same size as the empire and coincided exactly with it. In spite of such cartographic prowess, those who inherited this perfect map despised it for its uselessness. We know that it is impossible for us to draw such a perfect map of the philosophical past. But even if we could draw it, it would be a mute activity, devoid of all criticism, devoid of selection and interpretation. We cannot avoid the play of inclusion and exclusion that the canon entails; our maps will always be selective cartographies of the past; they will have the references and scales of our choice. Within this critical exercise of selection, one of the options that I have been interested in including is the voice of women philosophers, because of the interest that this voice has from the perspective of current feminist political and academic discussions. But in addition, as a professor and researcher working in Latin America, another of the voices I have tried to include is the philosophy written and discussed in our subcontinent.

The early modern philosophy that we mostly study and teach in Latin America is European philosophy. The relatively little research on the philosophy produced in our subcontinent between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries has been devoted to two main areas. On the one hand, the late scholastic philosophy taught in colonial academic institutions. On the other hand, the philosophical questions that emerged from the experience of conquest and colonization, including anthropological, ethical, political, and legal philosophical questions (Restrepo 2010, Canteñs 2010, Fernández Peychaux 2022). Neither of these expressions of colonial philosophy are included in our courses on early modern philosophy, as if they were completely irrelevant to us and isolated from the contemporary European discussion. I believe that this situation deserves a thorough review, and I wonder how we

can rethink the history of early modern philosophy by taking into account the philosophical discussions that took place in the Latin American colonies.

The aim of my paper is to discuss some methodological and meta-philosophical questions, starting from two Creole authors (Americans of European descent), Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695). First, I will analyze the advantages and disadvantages of historical reconstruction and rational reconstruction (Rorty 1984, Laerke, Schlieser and Smith 2013, Mahut 2017) to study these cases. Secondly, I will consider how the thought of these authors relates to European philosophy, in order to analyze what kind of reception takes place: is it a repetition, an appropriation, a "translation", etc. (Roig 1981, Dotti 1992, Fernandez Peychaux 2022)? Finally, I will address the discussion of whether philosophy is something universal that has no local characteristics, or whether it is a construction based on particular cultures that cannot be universalized (Gracia 1999, Mendieta 2010).