Also available from Bloomsbury

Comparative Philosophy Without Borders, edited by
Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber
Doing Philosophy Comparatively, by Tim Connolly
Landscape and Travelling East and West: A Philosophical Journey,
edited by Hans-Georg Muller and Andrew Whitehead
The Public Sphere From Outside the West,
edited by Divya Dwivedi and Sanil V

Comparative Studies in Asian and Latin American Philosophies

Cross-Cultural Theories and Methodologies

Edited by
Stephanie Rivera Berruz and Leah Kalmanson

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2018

Copyright © Stephanie Rivera Berruz and Leah Kalmanson, 2018

Stephanie Rivera Berruz and Leah Kalmanson have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Editors of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on p.vi constitute an extension of this copyright page.

Cover image © Pacific Ocean 1589 by Abraham Ortelius © University of Texas Libraries

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for, any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes..

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3500-0788-8
ePDF: 978-1-3500-0790-1
eBook: 978-1-3500-0789-5

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed and bound in Great Britain

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters.

Contents

Acknowledgments vi

1 Introduction *Stephanie Rivera Berruz and Leah Kalmanson* 1

Part I Coloniality and Orientalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

2 Occidentalism and Orientalism in the Late Writings of Antonio Caso *Andrea J. Pitts* 13

3 The Indian Veil: The Metaphysics of Racial Origins in the Americas *Adriana Novoa* 33

4 The Search for the Orient in Creole America: The Nineteenth Century and its Paths *Hernán G. H. Taboada (translated by Alba Lara Granero and Maria C. Vera)* 71

Part II New Directions in Asian-Latin American Comparative Philosophy

5 Breastfeeding in Between: A Lugonian Reading of Watsuji Tetsurō's *Rinrigaku* *Allison B. Wolf* 105

6 Two Ideas of Education: Amano Teiyū and José Vasconcelos *Agustín Jacinto Zavala* 129

7 Confucius and the Aztecs on The Mean *Sebastian Purcell* 155

Part III Comparative Philosophy from the Anti-colonial Perspective

8 Is Anarchy a False Hope? Latin American Revolutionaries Knew *Dhamma* and *Saddha* *Susan E. Babbitt* 175

9 The Ants and the Elephant: Martial Arts and Liberation Philosophy in the Americas *George Fourlas* 201

10 Legacies of Legitimacy and Resistance: Imperial and State Violence in South Asia and Latin America *Namrata Mitra* 217

Index 239

2

Occidentalism and Orientalism in the Late Writings of Antonio Caso

Andrea J. Pitts

In recent decades, scholars studying the philosophical and literary contributions of post-revolutionary Mexican thought have noted that a form of what Edward Said has described as "Orientalism" can be located among the writings of prominent authors in the first half of the twentieth century.[1] Recent scholarship in this area of study has explored the reception of Indian, Japanese, and Arabic writings, imagery, and ideas in the work of authors such as Francisco I. Madero, José Vasconcelos, and Octavio Paz.[2] These debates are centered on Said's articulation of the relationship between knowledge production and power that operates through the representation and circulation of writings about "the Orient" and "the Occident." In Julia Kushington's framing of what she describes as "Hispanic Orientalism," she cites Said's use of the term "Orientalism" as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[3] This form of domination, she proposes, persists through a "series of irreconcilable binary oppositions ... East/West, domination/subordination, Christian/non-Christian."[4] In the context of Latin American postcolonial theory, Kushington's work is part of a set of debates about whether the construction of archives and discursive trajectories about non-Western cultures, histories, and religions is distinctive from that of French and British iterations of Orientalist knowledge production. Theorists such as Silvia Nagy-Zekmi propose, for example, that Latin American iterations of Orientalism are continuous with these other forms of Orientalism, and they "indirectly demonstrate the hierarchy established by the colonial discourse in favor of Europe."[5] Kushington's view is that Hispanic Orientalism, unlike its British and French counterparts, is "political in the sense that it is opening a dialogue and exchange with the East."[6]

However, recent work by Laura J. Torres-Rodríguez has intervened in these debates by arguing that the construction of "the Orient" by Mexican intellectuals

during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was neither wholly distinct from European iterations of Orientalism nor wholly subsumable under the goals and representational practices of French and British imperialism. Instead, Torres-Rodríguez argues that the "Mexican Orientalist archive adapts itself to the political purposes of Mexican intellectuals whose awareness of their 'eccentric' position relative to the centers of cultural knowledge is very keen."[7] In this vein, Torres-Rodríguez offers a way to interpret the political and philosophical aims of post-revolutionary Mexican theorists as bearing significant relations of power and knowledge production to European writers and traditions, while also recognizing that some authors at the time were themselves critical of the emerging dominance of European and U.S. forms of cultural imperialism.

Torres-Rodríguez's recent work analyzes the writings of José Vasconcelos and, in particular, his 1919 work *Estudios indostánicos* (*Hindustani Studies*). Her framing of post-revolutionary Mexico and the reception of Francisco I. Madero's commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* offers an important context through which this essay will analyze the writings of Antonio Caso, a colleague of Vasconcelos and fellow member of the post-revolutionary group of intellectuals, politicians, and writers known as the *Ateneo de la Juventud*. In what follows, I first discuss the context of the *Ateneístas* and the philosophical and political goals of the *Ateneo*. Then, I turn to Caso's chapter titled "*El Oriente y el Occidente*" ("The Orient and the Occident") in his 1941 work *La persona humana y el estado totalitario* (*The Human Person and the Totalitarian State*). I argue that, in that piece, Caso demonstrates an oppositional stance toward the conflation of Hindu and Buddhist writings with liberal individualist traditions stemming from specifically Christian tenets within Occidental philosophy. In the final section, I conclude by demonstrating how Caso's analysis of the distinctions between "Occidental and Oriental" systems of thought defers to the conceptions of history and progress that support the dynamics of what Walter Mignolo and others have called the *colonial matrix of power*.[8] My interest in this final section is to articulate the extent to which Caso's work contributes to the Orientalism created by French, German, and British philosophy, and how the nationalist and philosophical questions circulating throughout Mexico during his life impacted his depiction of religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and their relevance for Mexican nationalism.

Before turning to this material, a brief caveat is in order regarding my analytic focus in this chapter. The contemporary debate regarding Orientalism in Mexico endorses Said's principle claim that discourses of Orientalism are not themselves about cultures and nations in Asia per se. Rather, following Said's articulation of

the concern, Orientalism "deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and the Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient."[9] Thus, in this sense, this chapter and the following analysis will not be an examination of whether any post-revolutionary Mexican writers were *accurately* depicting specific cultures or religious traditions. Rather, my concern is the creation of forms of literary and cultural placement for discourses about "the Orient" and "the Occident" within the writings of these thinkers.

1. The emergence of Orientalism after the Mexican Revolution

A significant historical and literary feature of the Orientalist writings of Latin America is the long-standing relationship between the geopolitical regions that would eventually become known as Spain, Northern Africa, and the Asian continent. As Kushington notes, the dominance of the Moors in Al-Andalus for over seven centuries gave rise to a tremendous impact on Iberian languages and cultures, an historical feature of which authors of Latin America have been well aware.[10] In the context of Mexico in particular, Torres-Rodríguez writes that "Between 1565 and 1815 Spanish trading ships sailed twice a year from the ports of Acapulco to Manila. This commercial route represented more than two centuries of direct contact between the Viceroyalty of New Spain and the Asian continent."[11] In addition, authors and policymakers of various modernization movements in Mexico were examining the political strategies of Japan and India, including the Meiji Restoration and decolonization struggles in India.[12]

In Mexico City, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo argues that the period from the 1860s to the 1940s was an era of "Odalisque-Mania," i.e. a period of exoticization and fetishization of Indian and Japanese religion, art, and philosophy in the urban history of the city.[13] These discursive and representational interests helped give rise to the modernist self-image of Mexico City as the intersecting urban center between "the East" and "the West." As such, several overlapping concerns among the writers, artists, and politicians of this period of Mexico City's history help explain the cultural obsession with India and Japan. Namely, "the allure of the alien, the wisdom of what is ancient, the sensuality of a variant sexuality, and the sublimity of longevity and authenticity" were among the concerns that led writers and other intelligentsia of Mexico City to examine "the Orient" in relation to Mexico.

In addition, the significance of the newly emerging national identity of Mexico during the early 1900s helps clarify why authors of the period were creating an Orientalist archive. The Mexican Revolution from roughly 1910 to 1920 was a period of political and cultural significance for Mexican intellectuals in terms of reimagining the trajectory and values of the nation. Philosophically, the *Científicos*, or the technocratic intellectuals that supported Porfirio Díaz's modernization doctrine and efforts, were central interlocutors for members of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*. The *Porfiriato*, as Díaz's reign was called, preceded the Mexican Revolution and was characterized by a number of philosophically distinct features that reflected the aims of Mexico's bourgeois ruling class. Moreover, the policies of the Porfiriato led to the further detriment of rural and indigenous communities throughout the country.

Eduardo Mendieta notes that the philosophical ideals of this regime—i.e. European variants of positivism—were derived in part from Auguste Comte's reading of the social utopian literature that followed the French Revolution.[14] Comte's view was a reworking of G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy of history wherein the development of human civilization is marked by three distinct stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and lastly, the positive or scientific.[15] The scientific stage of humanity thus required that human social and moral organization would be handled via a "physics of the social."[16] The eventual publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Biology* would help explicitly frame the trajectory of human progress in organic terms. As Mendieta writes, positivism became the view that "Society itself could be and should be seen as a living organism that grows, decays and dies in accordance with the laws of organic evolution."[17] In this sense, the struggle for survival that characterized the continuance of a species would and should be conceptually used, according to this view, to explain the growth and decline of social groups.

With respect to Mexico, Mendieta outlines several prominent features of Díaz's thirty-four-year rule. Among these, several are important for this study. Mendieta states of Díaz that his regime was "instrumental in the emergence of a Mexican, mestizo, bourgeoisie that linked their own wealth to the development of industry, railroads, and an educated elite."[18] This mestizo ruling elite, according to Mendieta, "concentrated all wealth and development in the capital city, to the detriment and impoverishment of most of the country".[19] Thus, growing inequalities and uneven wealth distribution across the nation began to give rise to various forms of social and political discontent, which themselves became seeds of the revolution.

Historians of the Mexican Revolution, Gilbert Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau state that 1876 to 1905 marks a "first phrase" of the Porfiriato in which the nation underwent a dramatic economic boom. During this period, Díaz opened up the nation to foreign investment and expanded transportation networks across the northern border to facilitate trade.[20] Regarding these changes, they write, "Foreign capital and technology helped restore the silver mines, U.S. investments unlocked the vast copper deposits of the northwestern state of Sonora, and foreign investment in oil and plantation crops (cotton, rubber, henequen, and coffee) also soared."[21] In addition, French, British, German, and U.S. cultural influences became prominent during this period. Architecture in the nation's major urban centers, food products, and department stores from Europe and the U.S. became fashionable, as did intellectual trends from these geopolitical regions.

Alongside this consolidation of wealth and urbanization in Mexico, a number of foreign travelers and investors were also fascinated by what Tenorio-Trillo calls the "search for the Brown Atlantis."[22] A sought-after authentic past, much like the mythic and moralizing images of Atlantis in Plato's writings, was prevalent throughout this period of Mexican history. Among those who sought this new Atlantis were artists, writers, and photographers interested in discovering an ancient, racialized, and "purely Indian" Other who survived the poverty and degradation of the rapidly transforming late-nineteenth century. For example, Mayan peoples and cultures were described as the "Atlantes," and noted writers in Theosophy such as Konstantin Balmont understood Mayan civilization to be part of a singular thread of spiritual significance that connected ancient Egyptian and Hindu traditions with indigenous cultures of the Americas.[23]

The "second phase" of the Porfiriato from 1905 to 1910 came as a result of the increasing socio-economic inequalities between the elite mestizo and foreign business class and the urban and rural working class.[24] The economic boom of the business elites of the nation had become possible only through the harsh exploitation of laborers in plantations that had spread throughout the southern regions of Yucatán, Chiapas, and the Valle Nacional de Oaxaca, and through the mining and transportation industries of the northern states of Chihuahua and Coahuila.

The beginning of the revolutionary stirrings was the 1906 labor protest of the Cananea miners of Sonora, which helped spark the subsequent textile, railway, and plantation worker strikes that followed throughout the next decade and a half. However, the labor protests that began during this second phase of the Porfiriato were also bolstered by an emerging middle class comprised of

university-trained intellectuals who brought with them a philosophical clash of ideas with the *Científicos* (scientists) of Díaz's regime. Leading intellectual voices of this movement were members of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, a group that formed in 1909. The *Ateneo* explicitly situated itself as opponents to the specific brand of Porfirian positivism that marked Díaz's modernization efforts in the nation. Among the scholars and educators in this group was Antonio Caso, who, in fact, helped fund the *Ateneo* and the faculty of philosophy at the National University of Mexico.[25]

The leading philosophical trajectory of the *Ateneo* was to turn away from the influences of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Gabino Barreda, and instead to embrace threads of vitalism and aesthetics from figures such as Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer, and José Enrique Rodó.[26] This turn, in Caso's work, involved a complicated series of debates about the method and content of positivism. Namely, as Alexander Stehn argues, Caso appears to seek to supplement or supersede positivism, rather than merely negate it.[27] For example, Caso's interests in the limits of the rational human intellect distinguish him from previous generations of philosophical influence in Mexico, including his previous mentor at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, Justo Sierra. In this sense, rather than merely reject a figure like Comte, Caso adapts tenets of Comtean positivism—i.e. interpreting altruistic acts as the highest stage of moral development—to defend an aesthetic turn to intuition as a founding component of moral personhood.[28] Art and aesthetic intuition become the limit cases that mark the inability of the biological sciences to explain the social, political, and moral behaviors of the human being. Caso interprets the natural sciences, and so too the positivists, as mistakenly focusing on particular objects of experiences as the means to generalize about human beings. Instead, through reference to figures like Edmund Husserl and Bergson, Caso argues that there are pure objects of intuition, divorced from the empirical constraints of the biological animal. Moreover, as Stehn states, Caso proposed that "the unity of humanity is not a metaphysical reality; it is a moral ideal."[29] In this sense, the *Científicos* and their search for social order through the natural sciences presupposes a metaphysical reality that comprises the human biological animal. Against this view, Caso proposes a moral ideal that gives primacy to human freedom and social responsibility. National culture, as Mario de la Cueva writes of the post-revolutionary period in which Caso constructed his philosophical works, was in the "service of liberty and justice."[30]

These metaphysical and moral positions were also importantly connected to Caso's interests in Buddhism and Hinduism. As I argue below, in his 1941 book *La persona humana y el estado totalitario* (*The Human Person and the Totalitarian State*), Caso asks why there has been a fascination with Buddhism and Hinduism in the context of Occidental philosophy. While Caso's earlier text *La existencia como economía, como desinterés y como caridad* demonstrated Caso's moral and aesthetic articulations of personhood, *La persona humana y el estado totalitario*, as well as his 1942 work *El peligro del hombre* (*The Peril of Man*) brought his earlier philosophical views to bear on socio-political issues, including legal personhood, freedom, statehood, and Marxism. Also, as John Haddox has noted, in these works Caso brings to full maturity his conception of personalism, a view regarding the centrality of personhood and the metaphilosophical primacy of persons as a category of analysis. Caso's emphasis on personhood develops throughout his corpus, and culminates in his 1940s writings. Put briefly, the moral and metaphysical endeavors that he pursued throughout his career regarding the relationship between the biological and non-biological aspects of the human animal become the means whereby he critiques both *laissez faire* individualist capitalism and totalitarian conceptions of communism in his later works.[31]

In this vein, his emphasis on the "peril" of humankind and the threat of totalitarianism can be read as a warning regarding the function of egoism in the human person. For example, Haddox argues that Caso was a critic of both capitalism and communism because each endorsed an incipient individualism that neglected the charitable and disinterested acts that constitute moral personhood.[32] Laissez faire capitalism treats the human being as a purely self-interested organic unity, and not, as Caso would propose, a fully creative and moral being. Moreover, personhood, for Caso, entailed the creation of culture, which was unique to human personhood. Communism, however, also failed to preserve human personhood, because, according to Caso, Marxist-Leninism is a "new religion" that offers an inadequate social ontology. Caso interprets historical materialism as reducing all products of culture to class struggle.[33] Arguing this point, he writes in *La persona humana* (*The Human Person*) that "the dogma of Marxism is the false selection of the foundation of the social."[34] Here, Caso cites Marxism as inadequately attending to the complexity of "human collective efforts."[35] Caso writes later in this same work that the community under Marxism becomes egoistic by denying the dignity of the individual.[36] Instead, the individual "must be subordinated to the community" and its own needs.[37] In this sense, the whole of the community takes on the character of an egoistic entity that denies the flourishing of human personhood.

Against these views Caso defends a conception of society based on justice, which, according to him, is the moral union of humankind.[38] A true community,

in the sense in which Caso describes it, recognizes human persons as "spiritual centers of cultural action," and culture "reflects the historical continuity of [its] generations and the moral solidarity of [its] people."[39] This conception of the human person in relation to society is thereby the means by which Caso comes to examine "el Oriente en la mentalidad occidental" ["the East in the Western mind"].

2. "El Oriente en la mentalidad de Caso"

Caso dedicates a significant middle section of *La persona humana* to "El Oriente y el Occidente" ("The East and the West"), and the subsections contained therein extend his analysis of personhood and the role of the state in the context of "Western" perceptions of "Eastern" religions. Of particular interest for this paper is the first subsection titled "El Oriente en la mentalidad occidental" wherein Caso outlines the concerted interests of Western philosophers in "Brahmanism, Taoism, and Buddhism."[40] As I mention above, Caso's interest in "el Oriente" was not new to the Spanish-speaking world. The *Bhagavad Gītā*, for example, had been translated into Spanish by José Roviralta Borrell in 1896. Also, Francisco I. Madero, a major figure involved in the political overthrow of the Porfiriato and the president of Mexico from 1911 until his assassination in 1913, read and published commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* from 1912 to 1913.[41] Madero's writings developed a view called *el espíritismo* (*spiritism*), which was, in his words, "the child of modern positivism and owes its advent to the methodical observation of phenomena that in previous epochs were declared supernatural."[42] A recent analysis of Madero's commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *el espíritismo* by José Ricardo Chaves describes spiritism as a defense of metaphysical individualism, democratic principles such as equality and freedom, and the social contributions of women.[43]

Madero came into contact with spiritism during his studies in France in 1891 and it was there that he encountered the ideas of Allan Kardec, the pseudonym of Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail.[44] Kardecist or *kardecista* spiritists included a number of religious and philosophical influences, including, as David Hess has discussed:

> hermetic and esoteric traditions (the astral body, vital fluids, and spirit communication through mediums), Indic philosophy (reincarnation and karma), highly reformed protestant theology (a Unitarian doctrine and the interpretation of heaven and hell as psychological states), Catholicism (the emphasis on spiritual hierarchies and the mediating role of an extrabiblical doctrine), social reformism (the emphasis on equality, progress, freedom of thought, and education), as well as modern science (what Kardec called the "experimental" side of spiritism, which later became known as psychical research and still later as parapsychology).[45]

Madero's writings, using pseudonyms of protagonists in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, such as "Arjuna" and "Bhima," also examined communication through mediums and similar themes as Kardec. Additionally, Madero founded the Center of Psychological Studies of San Pedro, Coahuila in which, as Chaves notes, he held spiritist meetings and experimented with electricity and photography.[46] Madero also presented himself as a heroic leader of the Mexican nation, positioning himself as similar to Arjuna being guided by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[47] Thus, Madero's writings come to embody the struggle for democracy and the principles of the revolution via this reference to the heroic narrative of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. His readers such as Vasconcelos would also come to refer to him as the "Arjuna of Mexico."[48]

Caso and his fellow *Ateneístas* were thus familiar with these writings by Madero and his interest in *el espíritismo*. Vasconcelos's writings and those of Madero, as Torres-Rodríguez has argued, serve to "Orientalize the Mexican Revolution" by using the *Bhagavad Gītā* as a means by which to reconfigure the political and educational stakes of the nation.[49] Furthermore, she states that Vasconcelos projects "his intellectual program for Mexico onto India's history" and in his romanticization of that history, he essentializes Dravidic peoples by casting them as a dominated population that nonetheless contributed "intuitive" and spiritual knowledge to "Hindustani society."[50] Comparing Mexico to India, Vasconcelos celebrates what he describes as the cultural and biological *mestizaje* [mixing] between "the white-skinned Aryan invaders" and "the mysterious and subtle Dravidians of dark skin."[51] On this point, Torres-Rodríguez writes, "Curiously, Vasconcelos postulates India—a country whose social organization is based on a prohibition of mixing instituted by an ancient caste system—as an example that demonstrates the positive qualities of mestizaje."[52] Similar to the *indigenismo* policies that would become instituted during the post-revolutionary period of the nation, Vasconcelos's odalisque-mania would also include studying the works of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore and the Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda.[53]

Unlike Vasconcelos's writings in *Estudios indostánicos* from 1919, some of Caso's writings on "el Oriente," which appeared over two decades later, became situated in the context of twenty years of national transformation since the end of

the revolution, and arose in the context of World War II. Moreover, during the 1920s and 1930s, Mexico had witnessed significant socio-political events, including the Cristero Rebellion (1926–1929) wherein the anticlerical law known as the *Ley Calles* sparked conflict between the Catholic Church and the Mexican state. This period of Mexican history also included a series of legislative reforms impacting indigenous populations in the nation. Under Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency (1934–1940), state efforts became focused on "Mexicanizing the Indian," including assimilationist policies and agrarian reforms that negatively impacted the consolidation of indigenous political demands against the state.[54] Cárdenas's economic plan was to revitalize the internal economy of the nation state by redistributing millions of hectares of farmland to peasant farmers in an effort to stimulate domestic food production.[55] However, during the 1920s there were significant regional differences impacting indigenous populations across the country, with some groups in the coffee-rich area of Soconusco being offered land reform and labor policies that sought to improve the conditions of the populations in the region. In the highlands of Chiapas, indigenous laborers drew up petitions for labor redistribution, but the state paid little interest to their concerns.[56] While some strides were taken to end debt servitude in the highland areas, politicians interested in gaining support during the Obregón administration overlooked the communities in these areas.[57] It was not until the Cárdenas administration and the political interests of the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano that these populations began to experience state-sponsored land and labor reform.[58]

Lastly, as I will defend in the final section of this chapter, it is important to note that in 1941 Caso was writing in the midst of the Second World War and witnessing the spread of National Socialism across Europe. In *La persona humana*, Caso warns of the spread of fascism, totalitarianism, and "mystical" invocations of nationalism, noting the political efforts of Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini as examples.[59] Unlike Vasconcelos, Caso's later reflections on the "Occidental" fascination with "Oriental" religions is couched in what he describes as an ongoing crisis regarding the relationship between the individual and the state. As Torres-Rodríguez aptly notes for Vasconcelos's use of Hindu sources, the author "uses stereotypes of India found in European and North American Orientalism to construct forms of cultural self-representation for Mexico."[60] However, as Torres-Rodríguez argues, Vasconcelos was also closely attending to the work of Indian writers who were themselves developing "nationalist discourses of spiritual and racial exceptionalism ... to construct a modernizing cultural program" in India.[61] The conclusion here is that Vasconcelos work, while engaging directly with European and North American sources also sought

resources from "subjectivities and traditions mediated by the impact of colonialism."[62] This difference, then, gives us resources by which we can examine Caso's writings on the West's fascination with the East. However, as we will see, Caso's invocation of Hinduism and Buddhism in his later work does not draw on the nationalist writings of authors such as Tagore or other nationalist figures. Instead, his works further entrench a conception of primitivism and a depoliticization of the cultural impact of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Caso's subsection in *La persona humana* "El Oriente en la mentalidad occidental" begins by analyzing Europe's fascination, post-World War I, with Hinduism and "Chinese philosophy." Citing the conservative French theorist Henri Massis's 1927 *Defense de l'Occident* (*Defense of the West*), Caso endorses a growing concern with Europe's investment in Confucianism, Buddhism, and "Hindustani philosophy."[63] Massis's own writings depict Europe as a region in decline, and the fashionable trends that brought the French, German, and British to texts and lectures by "Eastern sages promoting the purported 'wisdom of the East'" as a sign of Europe's decline.[64] A commentator on Massis's *Defense de l'Occident*, Paul Mazgaj writes:

> At the most fundamental conceptual level there existed a curious identity among Orientalism, Germanism, and Slavism: a common rejection of the Western insistence on form, finitude, and the authority of reason while, at the same time, an unhealthy fascination with the fluid, the infinite, and the individual imagination unfettered by the constraints of reason. Nowhere were the pitfalls of this mind-set more apparent than in questions of religion. Oriental religious imagination, according to Massis, was nothing more than an "immense ocean of speculation, a vast dream into which everything penetrates, embraces and mingles, until it falls into the gulf of the indeterminate. ..." Its polar opposite, Latin Christianity, possessed a solid core of doctrine, tempered by centuries of debate and the reasoned refutation of heresy.[65]

Similar to this form of othering and fearful warning, we find a concerted effort to understand the relationship between Christianity and "Eastern" religions in Caso's text. Along with Massis, Caso cites Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*), and German writer Hermann von Keyserling as an example of the fascination of *el Occidente* with *el Oriente*.[66]

For instance, focusing on Buddhism, Caso contrasts "the abandonment of desire, the negation of personality, the mystical contentment of renunciation" with Europe's post-war search for "peace, abandonment, [and] rest."[67] He writes: "As life has become poor, through the work of war, as social and political theories preach 'class struggle' within each nation and the struggle of nationalisms in humanity, the troubled consciences of Europe ask the East for a medical herb that predisposes

them to the obscurity and the Nirvana of birth and death ...."[68] Caso then interprets this longing as "a mistake," because within the Christian and rationalist principles of the West there is an irreducible conception of the person and the self; he then reads against this view an impersonal quest to abolish these elements in "the East."[69] He cites Socrates, St. Augustine, Descartes, and Husserl among the West's philosophical defenders of a strong conception of personalism and selfhood. He states that "Occidental personalism cannot become Oriental impersonalism" and that all the values of the West are centralized around its sense of self.[70] Thus, he claims that to abolish the individual "is beyond the limits of Western thought."[71]

He continues with a prescriptive claim that "Hopefully our civilization rejects the attacks of the East, [and] enriches itself with a contingent that enlists the great thinkers of China and Hindustan."[72] He concludes that "India was never a nation; it was never a fatherland" and contrasts this claim with the view that Israel was a people with "tight traditional ties."[73] Caso appears to claim in the defense of this distinction that monotheism affirms the power of the individual, as a necessary element of civilization and nationhood. Pantheism, he claims, leads to "the dissolution of the personal and spiritual into the vicissitudes of the fauna and flora."[74] The concluding part of this subsection of *La persona humana* turns to the work of European philosophers who "introduced and affirmed *el Oriente* in the Occident," such as Baruch Spinoza and Arthur Schopenhauer. For example, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*) constitutes the West's ability to inscribe the "asceticism and moral aspirations to Nirvana" through "the genius" of Schopenhauer, who Caso describes as "the Buddha of the West."[75] Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's analysis of the problem of the value of existence is read as an affirmation of the West's rightful investment in the human person as well.[76]

In another subsection of "El Oriente y el Occidente" titled "El personalismo y el panteísmo" ("Personalism and Pantheism"), Caso discusses the *Bhagavad Gītā* explicitly. He quotes several phrases from the text about Krishna and the abolition of desire, such as "full devotion [to Krishna] renounces good and evil."[77] Caso reads such passages as a renunciation of action and a form of motionlessness, stating "The Orient is motionlessness, the Occident, action: behold here the unmistakable difference."[78] Further cleaving apart these differences, Caso states "there are two souls, two great distinct and distant souls," the former he describes as "blissful ecstasy ... ten thousand years old ... [and] a priestly initiation ... [that] lives galvanized, like the Pharaohs in their ancient bones in white shrouds of centuries."[79] The latter is "subtle dialectics ... of yesterday ... of secular science in Berlin and Paris ... [and] is almost dying of feverish activity."[80] The remaining subsection of "El Oriente y el Occidente" analyzes the works of Nikolai Berdyaev, the significance of German Idealism, and the naturalism and axiological concerns of Rousseau and Nietzsche, defending in each case the development of an emphasis on the creative powers of the human person and the moral necessity of the will of the person.

In Caso's writings, we can certainly note temporal distinctions and descriptions of action and inaction that are characteristic of a great deal of British, German, and French Orientalist writings. Caso appears also to be debating within a specific strand of what Suzanne Marchard calls German "vitalist Orientalism" that emerged during the early twentieth century.[81] Unlike the nineteenth-century conceptions of stagnation that were projected onto Asian cultures and religions, the twentieth century, including figures that Caso read such as Hermann von Keyserling, were praising the resilience of "the East" in withstanding the moral and political decline that many Germans felt during the interwar years. Keyserling's work, in particular, "sought to reconstruct Western self-formation not by reviving Greek and Christian norms, but by juxtaposing German and oriental Geist."[82] In this sense, Marchard claims that had the German Empire expanded its colonial efforts past 1914, it likely would have created an Orientalist archive comparable to the French or the British.[83] Yet, due to the events of World War I, the "utilitarian" functions for creating an Orientalist archive waned given the loss of German colonies to Belgium, the UK, France, and Japan.[84]

Caso's writings are clearly in dialogue to some extent with this recent history, and his defense of personalism, and his trenchant critique of "the perils of man" and the decline of the human person respond to European trends circulating at the time. However, unlike Keyserling's romanticization of Indian and Chinese cultures and religions, Caso's defense of Christianity as a core component of personalism distinguishes his interest in comparative assessments of "el Oriente y el Occidente." As I describe in the final section, while such patterns of Mexican Orientalism appear in dialogue with other notable European variants of Orientalism, the form of Other- and self-reconstruction produced in Caso's work demonstrates Mexico's precarious placement in the global politics of the period.

3. Revisiting Mexican Orientalism

Commentators have noted the self- and Other-making Orientalist practices of Mexican literary authors such as Octavio Paz, José Juan Tablada, and Amado Nervo; however, less emphasis has been placed on the Orientalist archives of

Mexican philosophers. As we have outlined above, significant authors of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* drew resources from Indian and Chinese texts to comment on the philosophical efforts taking place during and after the revolution. While we can note the nation-building project in early Orientalist writings like those of Madero and Vasconcelos, Caso's later 1940s work appears to have been directly opposed to the idea of adopting spiritual and philosophical teachings from Asian authors and cultural traditions. In this vein, for example, note that Caso refers to Mexico, by the 1940s as firmly within "el Occidente." Madero's appropriation of the title of "Arjuna" sought to justify the Mexican Revolution as a mythic and divine struggle, and Vasconcelos' aesthetics heralded racial mixing and incipient *indigenista* beliefs about indigenous populations in Mexico. Caso's work, however, presupposes "two souls" between "el Oriente y el Occidente" that are divided firmly on metaphysical principles regarding the nature of the self and the state.

This last point regarding the "two souls" view in Caso points his readers to the changing terms of Mexican Orientalism in the 1940s. By the 1940s, the relationship between global views regarding communism and capitalism, as well as views regarding the function of the state with respect to differing economic and anti-imperialist aims have become quite pronounced. Caso's writings reject capitalism, communism, and imperialism, and his stances on these political issues become interwoven with his lifelong philosophical writings on the relationship between the natural and moral attributes of the human being. These latter themes bore their primary significance in response to the trenchant positivism of the Porfiriato, and thus gained philosophical momentum as a response to the materialist and secular philosophical period that preceded the revolution. Caso's *La existencia como economía, como desinterés y como caridad* (*Existence as Economy, Disinterest and Charity*) was a lifelong philosophical project that he revised twice throughout his life. The first edition was published in 1916, the second in 1919, and the last edition in 1943. Accordingly, by the end of his life, this masterwork proved itself adaptable to the shifting socio-political terms that impacted his thinking.

One such significant shift that helps explain Caso's "two souls" view was the influence of communism in Mexico. In 1919, a Bengali nationalist living in Mexico City, M.N. Roy, founded the Mexican Communist Party. Several years later he would become the Mexican delegate chosen to attend the second congress of Communist International. At that meeting, Roy offered a series of criticisms of an early draft of Vladimir Lenin's writings on nationalism and colonialism. The two initially disagreed on the role of bourgeois-democratic nationalism within revolutionary struggle. Roy expressed distrust for the national bourgeoisie in India, whereas Lenin expressed optimism in support of such groups to further the goals of anti-imperialism, and hence anti-capitalist struggle.[85] In Mexico City, as Tenorio-Trillo proposes, Roy would become a central figure linking Orientalist mysticism to Marxism. Tenorio-Trillo writes: "Indeed Theosophy, New Thought, and Hinduism were never far away from Mexican Marxism—as filtered through Roy, and their Mexican affiliates—represented a long-developing and powerful amalgam of Tolstoy plus Tagore; spirituality, sensuality, and the ecstasy of faraway wisdom; and the promises of eternal peace through divine violence."[86] Thus, while the combination of Christian and Hindu unification was a concerted project for Theosophy and for Vasconcelos in the 1920s, by the 1940s, Caso is embroiled in debates regarding what he sees as totalitarian tendencies of communism and the Aryan mysticism of National Socialism. Christianity now becomes a pronounced "soul" that must be distinguished from Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

Also, in light of the complicated relationship between imperialism and capitalism evidenced through Roy's debates with Lenin, Caso's writings support a strong preference for what he identifies as a "Western" form of state-making. Alongside the primitivization of Indian and Chinese cultures, Caso's writings also evince a view regarding "Asiatic despotism" that harkens back to tropes found in theorists such as Johann Gottfried von Herder, G.W. F. Hegel, and Karl Marx in the nineteenth century. In Herder, for example, was a "non-developmental political form, which did not permit the restless pursuit of knowledge which was the driving force of Western nations."[87] Hegel writes that "Oriental despotism" deprives the state of rights for the individual.[88] Both Herder and Marx also describe the Chinese Empire as "a mummy" that has been embalmed or carefully preserved, and as stagnant and ancient. Such nineteenth-century invocations can be easily seen in Caso's "two souls" passage mentioned above. However, the placement of Mexico in the context of thriving Western nation states appears to be a consistent thread in his writings as well. In this sense, in an effort to respond to the national identity that Mexico built for itself following the revolution, Caso navigates the tropes of Mexican Orientalism alongside those of the German. In addition, this conception of "el Oriente" would also serve to further undermine the needs of indigenous groups in Mexico. While during the 1910s and 1920s Mexico's indigenous populations were viewed as crucial to the revolution and as part of a mythically united civilization with "el Oriente," by the 1940s, Caso appears to consider indigenous populations as somewhat irrelevant to the political stakes of the nation state.

German philosophy also begins to take a very prominent role during the 1920s and 1930s in Mexico with the publication of José Ortega y Gasset's *Revista de Occidente* (*Journal of the West*), a text that circulated throughout Latin America.[89] Moreover, Caso's students such as Samuel Ramos and Adalberto García de Mendoza were reading Husserl, and Ramos even criticizes Caso for his "ignorance of all philosophy after Croce, Bergson, Boutroux and James."[90] Caso appears, then, to begin to examine Husserl and German phenomenology in the early 1930s and publishes several books in the 1930s and 1940s dedicated to phenomenology. As Antonio Zirión has argued, in 1941 Caso interprets phenomenology and Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego as an important critical tool against positivism.[91] Zirión writes: "Caso summarizes his opposition to positivism old and new with the help of Husserl's weapons: the revindication of universal objects and an ideal world, the independence of logic from psychology, the possibility of an essential intuition, the widening of the positivistic principle of experience into a 'positivism of essences.'"[92] Thus, we can note here that Caso's turn toward German philosophical writings, including the political works of Spengler and Keyserling, constitute a long-standing effort to situate Mexican philosophy and the Mexican nation state in the context of the "el Occidente" and against "el Oriente."

While there are many other important avenues to explore regarding these links between Mexican and German Orientalisms, or between Mexican Marxism and mysticism, one facet that this analysis of Caso brings to the fore is the set of differential modes by which Caso and other Mexican intellectuals are vying for a conception of modern nationhood and futurity at the expense of an understanding of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle. What Mignolo calls the "colonial matrix of power" is an understanding of the constitution of modernity via colonialism and its replicants. Thus, as an analytical tool, the colonial matrix of power highlights epistemic currents, and socio-economic modes of labor and racialization that constitute modern nation states. As we can see through Caso's work, the othering of Asian cultures, politics, and religion denies the laboral, racial, and epistemic products of decolonial struggle taking place globally. Moreover, we see a conservatism in Caso's writings about "el Oriente y el Occidente" that further neglects the relationships between capitalism, Christianity, and imperial domination. Latin American decolonial authors of the twentieth century, such as Aníbal Quijano and Enrique Dussel note such connections and point to the continued need to understand the vast epistemic mechanisms by which coloniality becomes reinforced and recirculated across Latin America and the Global South. As we have seen in Caso's writings, the "two souls" hypothesis and his defense of Christian personalism demonstrate a further obstacle to unpack, understand, and overturn.

Notes

1 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*; Taboada, "Oriente y mundo clásico en José Vasconcelos"; Torres-Rodríguez, "Orientalizing Mexico."
2 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*; Chaves, "La Bhagavad Gita según San Madero"; Torres-Rodríguez, "Orientalizing Mexico."
3 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*, 1 (citing Said, *Orientalism*, 3).
4 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*, 1–2.
5 Nagy-Zekmi, *Moros en la costa*, 15–16.
6 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*, 3.
7 Torres-Rodríguez, "Orientalizing Mexico," 80–81.
8 Mignolo, "Global Coloniality and the World Disorder," 2016.
9 Said, *Orientalism*, 5.
10 Kushington, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*, 2.
11 Torres-Rodríguez, "Orientalizing Mexico," 80.
12 Ibid.
13 Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*.
14 Mendieta, "The Death of Positivism and the Birth of Mexican Phenomenology," 3.
15 Ibid., 4.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 2.
19 Ibid.
20 Joseph and Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*, 20–21.
21 Ibid., 21.
22 Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 147.
23 Ibid., 162.
24 Joseph and Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*, 25.
25 Mendieta, "The Death of Positivism and the Birth of Mexican Phenomenology," 6.
26 Stehn, "From Positivism to Anti-Positivism," 59.
27 Ibid., 60.
28 Ibid., 66–67.
29 Ibid., 68.
30 Caso, *Obras completas*, vol. VII, vii.
31 Haddox, "Latin American Personalist: Antonio Caso," 115.
32 Ibid., 114.
33 Caso, *Obras completas*, vol. VII, 43.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 44.
36 Ibid., 118.

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid. 119.
39 Ibid. Caso's conception of "spirituality" is based in a Christian ethics of love and charity. For more on this, see Haddox, "Life as Love," in *Antonio Caso: Philosophy of Mexico*.
40 Caso, *La persona humana*, 93.
41 Chaves, "La Bhagavad Gita según San Madero," 75.
42 Ibid., 74.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Hess, Spirits and Scientists, 2–3.
46 Chaves, "La Bhagavad Gita según San Madero," 75.
47 Ibid., 76.
48 Ibid., 73.
49 Torres-Rodriguez, "Orientalizing Mexico," 79.
50 Ibid., 81.
51 Ibid., 82.
52 Ibid.
53 Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 261–262.
54 Joseph and Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*, 189.
55 Collier, "Peasant Politics and the Mexican State," 74.
56 Ibid., 77
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 78.
59 Caso, *La persona humana*, 76–81.
60 Torres-Rodriguez, "Orientalizing Mexico," 89.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 90.
63 Caso, *La persona humana*, 91.
64 Mazgaj, "Defending the West," 113.
65 Ibid., 114–115.
66 Caso, *La persona humana*, 91.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 92.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 93.
74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., 96.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 98.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 100.
80 Ibid.
81 Marchard, "German Orientalism and the Decline of the West," 471.
82 Ibid., 471–471.
83 Ibid., 471.
84 Ibid.
85 Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, 13.
86 Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, 277.
87 Sawer, *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, 26.
88 Ibid., 27.
89 Zirión, "Phenomenology in Mexico," 76.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 78.
92 Ibid.

References

Caso, Antonio. *Obras completas*, volume VII. Mexico City: UNAM, 1975.

Chaves, José Ricardo. "La Bhagavad Gita según San Madero." *Literatura Mexicana* 23, no. 1 (2012): 69–81.

Collier, George A. "Peasant Politics and the Mexican State: Indigenous Compliance in Highland Chiapas." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 3, no. 1 (1987): 71–98.

Haddox, John. *Antonio Caso: Philosopher of Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971.

Haddox, John. "Latin American Personalist: Antonio Caso." *The Personalist Forum* 8, no. 1 (1992): 109–118.

Haithcox, John Patrick. *Communism and Nationalism in India: M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920–1939*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Hess, David J. *Spirits and Scientists: Ideology, Spiritism, and Brazilian Culture*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 1991.

Joseph, Gilbert M. and Jürgen Buchenau. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Latin Nineteenth Century*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Kushington, Julia A. *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition: In Dialogue with Borges, Paz, and Sarduy*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991.

Marchand, Suzanne. "German Orientalism and the Decline of the West." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145, no. 4 (2001): 465–473.

Mazgaj, Paul. "Defending the West: The Cultural and Generational Politics of Henri Massis." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 17, no. 2 (1991): 103–23.

Mendieta, Eduardo. "The Death of Positivisms and the Birth of Mexican Phenomenology." In *Latin American Positivism: New Historical and Philosophic Essays*, edited by Gregory D. Gilson and Irving W. Levinson. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013.

Mignolo, Walter. "Global Coloniality and the World Disorder: Decoloniality after Decolonization and Dewesternization after the Cold War." *World Public Forum: Dialogue of Civilizations* (2016). http://wpfdc.org/images/2016_blog/W.Mignolo_Decoloniality_after_Decolonization_Dewesternization_after_the_Cold_War.pdf.

Nagy-Zekmi, Silvia. *Moros en la costa: Orientalismo en Latinoamérica.* Iberoamericana/Vervuert: Madrid, 2008.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary Edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Sawer, Marian. *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977.

Stehn, Alexander. "From Positivism to Anti-Positivism: Some Notable Continuities." In *Latin American Positivism: New Historical and Philosophic Essays*, edited by Gregory D. Gilson and Irving W. Levinson. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013.

Taboada, Hernán G. H. "Oriente y mundo clásico en José Vasconcelos." *Cuyo: Anuario de filosofía argentina y americana* 24 (2007): 103–119.

Tenorio-Trillo, Mauricio. *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Torres-Rodríguez, Laura J. "Orientalizing Mexico: *Estudios indostánicos* and the Place of Indian in José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica.*" *Revista hispánica moderna* 68, no. 1 (2015): 77–91.

Zirión, Antonio Q. "Phenomenology in Mexico: A Historical Profile." *Continental Philosophy Review* 33, no. 1 (2000): 75–92.

3

The Indian Veil: The Metaphysics of Racial Origins in the Americas

Adriana Novoa

The cultural connections between India and the Americas were developed over the nineteenth century and became extremely important by the first quarter of the twentieth century. These links have been explored in history and literature, but less from the philosophical context that framed the popularity that Orientalism had during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In this essay, I will explain how the importance that India acquired in the Americas should be related to the philosophical debates between materialism and spiritualism, and how these debates were not a local expression, but a problem that was simultaneously addressed in the Americas and Europe.

This essay is organized around the analysis of Indian philosophical ideas as an indispensable part of the development of post-Enlightenment culture and their re-emergence at different periods of philosophical renewal, addressing the possibility of national and universal identities. The re-contextualization of philosophical thought will help explain the relevance that Indian philosophy acquired in the Americas. Starting by the mid-nineteenth century we can observe that references to India were used for two reasons: first, to create a unified narrative about the origins of humanity; second, to provide a philosophical foundation to the debates between spiritualists and materialists, particularly after the dominance that Darwinian science had by the last quarter of the century. It is in the context of the debates about science and metaphysics that we can understand the shift toward a new understanding of spiritualism with roots in India's philosophical ideas, which incorporated the different intellectual traditions that existed in Europe and the Americas. Finally, the previous analysis contextualizes one of the most well-known books written in Latin America: José Vasconcelos's *The Cosmic Race*, a text that has not been appreciated for its role in synthesizing the narratives of oriental origins and scientific evolutionism that developed over the nineteenth century.