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## Ideological Grounds Determination in Latin American History and Culture

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**Abstract:**

*The relevance of the problem under study is conditioned by the importance of the Mexican scientist, philosopher, historian of culture and a public figure Leopoldo Zea and his scientific heritage for the world Latin American studies.*

*The article is aimed at main ideological grounds determination for his unique methodological approach to the history and the culture of Latin America. An important element of this publication is the systematization of scattered historiographic information devoted to the reconstruction and the study of the scientific concept by Leopoldo Zea.*

*The practical importance of the methodological approach by Leopoldo Zea should be noted especially. The methodology developed by him turned out to be applicable to historical and cultural studies of non-European regions of the world. The leading approach to the study of this problem is the interdisciplinary approach, in which the main research method - the method of comparative analysis aimed at the revealing of the author's methodology general grounds by Leopoldo Zea with the well-known Western European methodologies of the second half of the 20th century and his own methodological innovations.*

*The main results of the article are represented by an integrated approach to research problems. The materials of the article can be useful to develop the lecture materials for the students studying a wide range of social-humanitarian educational programs during the selection of the methodological approach in anthropological, historical, cultural, artistic, scientific and philosophical research.*

**Keywords:** Latin America, Leopoldo Zea, "La Filosofía Latinoamericana", Methodological Synthesis, The History of Ideas.

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## **1. Introduction**

Two-hundred-year history of historical thought development in Latin America has become, first of all, the search for the place of the region in the world historical and cultural process. The specificity of Latin American historical and cultural thought was that only public figures, writers, publicists and philosophers (especially in the second half of the 20th century) studied the various aspects of Latin American history. After the Second World War, the development of historical and cultural identity concept of the Latin American region comes to the forefront. This process is associated with the change in the world alignment of forces, with a brutal confrontation between two supersystems, super-ideologies (capitalist and socialist one), the actualization of identity searches due to the collapse of the world colonial system, and the problem aggravation of the third world countries, whose list also includes Latin America.

Latin American intellectuals - innovators have made a significant contribution to the study of cultural and historical problems. They were engaged in the development of cultural study methods, its conceptual-categorical apparatus and the essence of dialogical processes in Latin America. One of the leaders of this intellectual movement was the Mexican philosopher and historian of culture Leopoldo Zea who created a unique concept of the cultural and historical identity of Latin America.

Leopoldo Zea really introduced a different understanding of Latin American culture history as a "project". The historical and the cultural development of the Latin American region is cognized as the sequential change of historical, cultural and philosophical "projects" (as a rule, Western European ones). L. Zea, considering the "movement" of Latin American history and culture in a number of his works, presents it as the logical change of these "projects" (the "project" of culture as "discrimination", the "project" of culture as "juxtaposition", the "project" of Latin American culture as a problem). In order to understand the essence of such a development of the historical and cultural process, it is necessary to understand the essence of the methodological approach applied by Leopoldo Zea.

## **2. Methodology**

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study was the conceptual provisions of the interdisciplinary approach, which is an integral characteristic of modern social and humanitarian knowledge state.

One of the main research methods during the consideration of this problem is the method of comparative analysis aimed at the revealing of the author's methodology general grounds by Leopoldo Zea with the well-known Western European methodologies of the second half of the 20th century and his own methodological innovations.

Biographical method occupies a special place in the used methods of research. It helped to analyze the evolution of the methodology by Leopoldo Zea in the direct relation with his becoming as a scientist.

### 3. Results

Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004) is the Professor of Philosophy and Philology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Head of the Center for the coordination and distribution of knowledge in the field of Latin American Studies UNAM, the Head of the International Federation of Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean (FIEALC), the Head of the Coordinating Diffusion Center for Latin American Studies at UNESCO (CCyDEL), the Director General of the Culture Commission at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico.

Leopoldo Zea and many of his biographers point out that the meeting with the great "teachers" (José Ortega y Gasset, José Gaos, Arnold Toynbee), the knowledge of ordinary Latin Americans attitudes, the desire to contribute to the liberation of the Latin American region (to escape from the captivity of the colonial system at first, and then from the rigid frameworks of the "third world"); the presence of a permanent internal ethnic-cultural conflict - all this influenced the development of its historical views and scientific principles.

All these methodological basics - the idea of "perspectivism", the civilizational approach, the Marxist dialectical method, the principle of the history of ideas prevalence in the historical and cultural process (shown in the "liberation philosophy"), as well as the use of the methods from other sciences, an obligatory emphasis on ethical and axiological aspect of the issues were synthesized by Leopoldo Zea and determined the development of his own methodology, referred to as "la filosofía latinoamericana".

M.C. Dias said that many Latin American philosophers perceived, copied European philosophies, but did not correlate them with their own problems. In his opinion, Leopoldo Zea was the only one who could create a special way of Latin American reality learning. In the works by Leopoldo Zea, such a methodological synthesis was necessarily aimed first of all at the solution of historical and historical and cultural problems.

Many researchers of his scientific heritage made repeated attempts to assess the significance of "la filosofía latinoamericana". However, the only thing that was determined is that it is only a tool which is used by him for his own purposes.

«La filosofía latinoamericana» became the philosophical and the methodological basis, the use of which allowed to justify the right of the nation to its own vision of the world conceptually and provide the analysis of this worldview specifics. The aim of «la filosofía latinoamericana», according to Leopoldo Zea, was the following thesis: "Understanding of the past means the understanding of modern period!" and,

therefore, to find their consciousness, their destiny, their place in the world. For Leopoldo Zea, the acquisition of one's own consciousness means the equal inclusion of Latin America in the community of all the peoples of the world.

Together with his like-minded person (Octavio Paz, Francisco Miro-Quesada, Abelardo Villegas, etc.) Leopoldo Zea clearly outlines the range of issues, the solution of which determines the future of Latin America in his opinion:

1. Studying the history of ideas on the continent.
2. Studying the fates and perception of European culture in Latin America.
3. The analysis of a Latin American consciousness.
4. The theoretical comprehension of the history of Latin American culture.

Recently, a number of publications have appeared in which "la filosofía latinoamericana" is regarded as a postmodern discourse. "This is the discourse of "liberation", historically mediated by the discourse of search for one's own essence" (Abushenko, 2001). Its purpose is the reinterpretation of Latin American intellectual history, the overcoming of inferiority complexes, peripheral and marginal consciousness prevailing among Latin Americans, the inclusion in the world philosophical process.

The methodological approach by Leopoldo Zea was criticized very often (either in its entirety or in its separate aspects). The absence of a common, ascending line of the historical and cultural process in the Latin American region, the particular importance of the ideological aspect of this issue, and the unique methodology allowed Leopoldo Zea to treat Latin American history and culture in a different way than it was previously accepted in European historical science.

One of the researchers of his work J. Gracia speaks about the meaning of this concept and how it should be perceived by a reader (a researcher) in just a few sentences. First, he states, that "la filosofía latinoamericana" by Leopoldo Zea is not the only one that appeared in the second half of the 20th century in Latin America, since the influence of José Ortega y Gasset teaching led many thinkers away from the study of exclusively economic, social and political problems.

Secondly, "la filosofía latinoamericana" by Leopoldo Zea has no social consequences, i.e. it is a pure theory, the aim of which is to change the attitude of Hispanics to their historical past and to the European heritage. Thirdly, "la filosofía latinoamericana" by Leopoldo Zea, according to J. Gracia (1975), is the analysis of general historical circumstances (rather than historical facts) and "illustrating" their philosophical ideas. And, finally, the last thesis: the value of the works by Leopoldo Zea is indisputable only for those researchers who analyze the situation in Latin America by a similar methodological method.

A similar characteristic was given to Leopoldo Zea by the Soviet philosopher E.V. Dementchonok in the early 80-ies of the XXth century. He noted that "the methodological premises by L. Zea limit his philosophical search by the sphere of consciousness and culture as the embodiment of consciousness" (Demenchonok, 1982) and therefore his position retains the features of contemplation and utopianism.

Leopoldo Zea's utopian views are shared by his other colleagues and critics. So, M. Salazar Bondy rebukes Leopoldo Zea that he left from the actual philosophy, making the object of his study not a person in general, but a real person. W. Raat puts forward several claims at once: the reduction of history by Leopoldo Zea only to the history of ideas; the absence of a social (class) component in his historical and cultural studies; the orientation to the change of Latin American consciousness, and not his social reality through a revolutionary coup; and the use of mostly literary and philosophical sources for his research.

The concept of the historical and cultural identity of Latin America by Leopoldo Zea, developed within the framework of the special methodology "la filosofio latinoamericana" created by him allows his historiographers to regard the author as an existentialist (Krombet, 1988; Dementchonok, 1982; Gomez-Martinez, 1997), or as the representative of the anti-imperialist-democratic historical trend, or a historian-positivist (Gracia, 1975; Romero Baro, 1988), or the representative of the history of ideas (Vinokurov, 1990; Gomez-Martinez, 1997; Pla Leon, 1992) and even a philosopher-postmodernist (Mankovskaya, 1994; Abushenko, 2001) depending on their own scientific views.

According to the author of this work, the philosophical views by Leopoldo Zea make it possible to attribute him to existentialists. The key concept of existentialism "existence" is an important category in the studies by Leopoldo Zea; Arguing about the self-consciousness of the Latin American, Leopoldo Zea likens him to the "encapsulated" self-consciousness of the European from the 20th century (The possible fullness of his existence depends on the scale of transcendence, the possibility of "going beyond one's limits"). Besides, Leopoldo Zea uses the existentialist-oriented conceptual-categorical apparatus (this is the "perspectivism" by José Ortega y Gasset, this is also the "world in which all are aliens" by Martin Heidegger, this is the transition from "It-I" to "I-You" by Gabriel Marcel, etc.

Since the historical and cultural specificity of the Latin American region for Leopoldo Zea is conditioned precisely to the specific way of Latin American thinking (which finds its development in the history of ideas), then it can be argued that the trend of intellectual history was the closest to him from the many modern trends of historiosophic thought.

#### **4. Discussion**

Despite the wide popularity of the works by Leopoldo Zea both in the West and in Russia, the degree of his works study is completely inadequate.

For example, in Western historiography, works can not do without the use of the plots involving Leopoldo Zea; His terminology is used; He is appealed to when it comes to the resolution of controversial issues about the cultural identity of a region. However, a detailed study of "la filosofía latinoamericana" by Leopoldo Zea, the historical conditions that led the thinker to this kind of understanding of a historical and cultural situation in Latin America, are presented currently by T. Medin, J.L. Gomez-Martinez and R. Fornet-Betancourt. They deal with certain issues of historian methodology and creativity.

Almost the same can be said about the degree of Leopoldo Zea's work study in Russian historiography. For Soviet and Russian Latin Americanists, the appeal to Leopoldo Zea's creative legacy in the mid-1970-ies of the XXth century was marked the expansion of research interest scope and the turn to the problems of Latin America ethnic-cultural history.

## **5. Resume**

The following conclusions were drawn after the work performance:

Summarizing all of the mentioned above, one can characterize a special place that Leopoldo Zea occupied in the history of Latin American thought: "Leopoldo Zea is a natural product of the 20th century: he is a Mexican born by the Revolution and a dual attitude of Western Europe who does not recognize the differences of the continent" (Pla Leon, 1992).

At the same time, he developed the methodological approach to the problems of Latin American history and culture - "la filosofía latinoamericana", based on the methodology of history and culture study popular among Latin American intellectuals (the idea of "perspectivism", the civilizational approach, Marxism). The nature of this approach can be defined as a synthetic one.

"La filosofía latinoamericana" used the categories of these methodological approaches as a tool, endowing them with the Latin American historical and cultural context.

## **6. Conclusions**

The material of the article is of interest to the experts who are engaged in the system of higher education teaching on a wide range of social-humanitarian educational programs at the selection of a methodological approach in anthropological, historical, cultural, artistic, scientific and philosophical research.

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