

## “We love and adore our fatherland like a goddess:” The Radical Catholic Nationalism of Pedro Albizu Campos

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### English Abstract

This paper examines political philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century political leader and public philosopher from Puerto Rico. It argues that his apparent similarity to other anti-colonial thinkers of his day like José Vasconcelos and José Martí belies a deeper difference. It uses commentaries of his work by scholars such as Carlos Rojas Osorio and Antonio Steven-Arroyo to show that Albizu’s unflinching resistance against imperialism that cost him nearly three decades of freedom and ultimately his life was in his mind not the defiant act of a political rebel but the faithful obedience of a devout Catholic. It argues that Albizu’s radical Catholic nationalism marks him as an eclectic political thinker of the Americas whose work complicates common narratives about the history of political philosophy in Latin America and the geography of anti-colonialism in the Americas. Most importantly, Albizu offers much needed insight into Puerto Rico’s present crisis.

### Resumen en español

Este artículo examina la filosofía política de Pedro Albizu Campos, un filósofo público y político puertorriqueño del siglo XX. El artículo sostiene que su similitud aparente con otros pensadores anticoloniales de su época como José Vasconcelos y José Martí oculta una diferencia más profunda. Utiliza comentarios de su trabajo de académicos como Carlos Rojas Osorio y Antonio Steven-Arroyo para mostrar que la resistencia inquebrantable de Albizu contra el imperialismo que le costó casi tres décadas de libertad y, en última instancia, su vida no era para Albizu el acto desafiante de un rebelde político, sino la fiel obediencia de un católico devoto. Sostiene también que el nacionalismo católico radical de Albizu lo marca como un pensador político ecléctico de las Américas cuyo trabajo complica las narrativas comunes sobre la historia de la filosofía política en América Latina y la geografía del anticolonialismo en las Américas. Más importante, Albizu ofrece una visión muy necesaria de la crisis actual de Puerto Rico.

### Resumo em português

Este artigo examina a filosofia política de Pedro Albizu Campos, líder político do século 20 e filósofo público de Porto Rico. Argumenta que sua aparente semelhança com outros pensadores anticoloniais de sua época, como José Vasconcelos e José Martí,

esconde uma diferença mais profunda. Ele usa comentários de seu trabalho de estudiosos como Carlos Rojas Osorio e Antonio Steven-Arroyo para mostrar que a resistência inabalável de Albizu contra o imperialismo lhe custou quase três décadas de liberdade e, em última análise, sua vida não era o ato desafiador de um rebelde político mas a fiel obediência de um católico devoto. Argumenta que o nacionalismo católico radical de Albizu o marca como um pensador político eclético das Américas, cujo trabalho complica narrativas comuns sobre a história da filosofia política na América Latina e a geografia do anticolonialismo nas Américas. Mais importante, Albizu oferece uma visão muito necessária da atual crise de Porto Rico.

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## Introduction

Scholars of American Philosophy have in recent years fundamentally transformed the canon of American thought and shifted its center by fostering a dialogue between traditional American philosophical texts and those from across the Americas. This paper hopes to contribute to this transformation by critically examining the political philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos (1891-1965), a political leader and public philosopher from Puerto Rico whose work makes a valuable contribution to the growing Inter-American philosophical conversation. While Albizu was a complex and dynamic figure with a wide range of political relationships and intellectual interests, he focused unwaveringly from the time of his early adulthood on the mission of securing Puerto Rico's independence from the United States and establishing its international recognition as a sovereign nation. From this perspective Albizu might appear to fit comfortably alongside other, more prominent, Latin American thinkers of his era, such as José Vasconcelos and José Martí, who also argued for the political independence of Latin American countries and solidarity between them in the face of increasing military, political and economic intrusions by the United States. While Albizu's political program overlaps with those of his more famous Latin American colleagues, he nonetheless stands apart from other Latin American philosophers of independence for his unique intellectual and political foundation. While he shared these thinkers' zeal for Latin American political and cultural autonomy, Albizu's nationalism rested on a philosophical foundation completely distinct from those of his contemporaries, specifically a political philosophy rooted in conservative Roman Catholic doctrine.

Drawing from political theories developed by Spanish Thomistic theologians such as Francisco Suárez (1536-1624) and Jamie Balmes (1810-1841) and modeling a political praxis on the efforts of early 20th Century Irish revolutionaries and Spanish Falangists, Albizu argued that the Puerto Rican people bore not merely the right, but the sacred duty to resist the US occupation of their island nation.[1] His advocacy for the anti-colonial struggle for freedom waged by not only the people of Puerto Rico, but also

by people living under colonial regimes in Cuba, the Philippines, Ireland and India, marks him as an eclectic American public intellectual whose work complicates common narratives about the history of political philosophy in Latin America and the geography of anti-colonialism in the Americas. Furthermore, Albizu’s work gives us a window into a tradition of Catholic nationalist political philosophy in the Americas that was later overshadowed by the Latin American political movements rooted in Liberation Theology. Studying Albizu’s political philosophy shows us another valence of Catholic thought in the Americas, one that both supported anti-colonial political movements such as Sinn Fein in Ireland and provided moral and intellectual cover for fascist regimes in Spain and Italy in the 1930’s. As philosophers hopefully take further note of his public intellectualism and complicated political legacy, they can examine and incorporate his unique political philosophy – which was religiously conservative yet politically radical, broadly cosmopolitan yet fiercely nationalist—into the emergent “hemispheric conceptual frame” that promises to usher in a truly American philosophical tradition that attends to the interactions, cultures and problems of all the peoples of the American hemisphere.[2]

This paper will illuminate the primary features of Albizu’s unique political philosophy and contextualize it within the works of more prominent philosophers of the Americas like José Vasconcelos, José Martí and José Enrique Rodó. It will use commentaries of his work by Albizu scholars such as Carlos Rojas Osorio and Antonio Steven-Arroyo to understand how Albizu’s unflinching resistance against imperialism— a resistance that cost him nearly three decades of freedom and ultimately his life—was, in his mind, not the defiant act of a political rebel but the faithful obedience of a devout Catholic. It also considers the critiques of Albizu’s work by thinkers such as José Luis Gonzáles and Luis Angel Ferrao who argue that for all his moral courage and passionate love of the people of Puerto Rico, Albizu was an anti-democratic reactionary who longed to return Puerto Rico to a paternalistic Catholic hegemony. This paper neither condemns nor exculpates Albizu as philosopher in *toto*, if for no other reason that his philosophically relevant work has not received adequate scholarly attention. Instead it strives to offer a balanced assessment of his political philosophy while arguing that, regardless of its potential shortcomings, it warrants greater scholarly attention and inclusion within histories of philosophy in the Americas. We can say of him what can be said of nearly every thinker or human being: an honest assessment of his life work reveals both deep flaws and praiseworthy characteristics. Whatever his philosophical warrant, potential political efficacy or reactionary obsolescence, this work argues that his unique and insightful philosophical voice warrants recovery. This paper therefore seeks to incorporate Albizu’s political philosophy into Inter-American philosophical conversations that, as Cornel West said of pragmatism, should be a “cultural commentary or set of interpretations that attempt[s] to explain America to itself at a particular historical moment.”[3]

## Albizu Campos in Political and Philosophical Context

Before contextualizing Albizu’s political philosophy within its era and region, it is important to at least briefly sketch his remarkable and tragic biography.[4] Pedro Albizu Campos was a proud Ponceño (a resident of the city of Ponce) of African and Portuguese descent who endured a difficult childhood, earned honors at the University of Vermont, received a law degree from Harvard and served honorably in the US Army. [5] He was stoic in his self-discipline, generous as a colleague and friend, sweetly doting as a father and husband, and unflinching in his political convictions. His studies at the University of Vermont and Harvard University made him familiar with US culture and its ideals of democracy, which was why he was all the more heartbroken and enraged when the country he admired in his youth betrayed those ideals with the military occupation and economic exploitation of Puerto Rico.[6] Instead of an “empire of liberty” where neighboring countries might freely prosper and cooperate under the aegis of the United States protection, the US deployed its army – the same force in which Albizu served as an officer and had once liberated American colonies from the British Empire—to establish a colonial regime in Puerto Rico that was dismissive of the value of Puerto Rican culture and expressly white-supremacist in its logic and justification: as President Taft bluntly proclaimed, “the whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally.”[7]

It was an occupation that the people of Puerto Rico did not quietly abide, choosing instead to rebel even though they were vastly outmatched in terms of size and materiel. The resulting suppression of the revolt by the people of Puerto Rico was both unheralded in its brutality and nearly complete in its absence from the memories of most US citizens. Nelson Denis explains that “[t]o suppress the revolution, the US Army deployed 5,000 troops and bombarded two towns—the only time in history that the United States bombarded its own citizens. They also arrested thousands of Nationalists and imprisoned their leader, Albizu Campos. While Albizu was in prison, evidence strongly indicates, the US government subjected him to lethal radiation – until it killed him.”[8] In the face of this violent colonial repression that deprived him of his life and decades of his freedom, Albizu argued for Puerto Rican resistance and autonomy using a political philosophy of independence with ancient roots and radical consequences.

Albizu’s life is little-known outside Puerto Rico and his political philosophy all but erased from philosophy scholarship. His lack of recognition is due in part to the fact that he was a true public intellectual who focused far more on public engagement than scholarly production. The philosopher, Catholic priest and Albizu scholar Antonio Stevens-Arroyo traces Albizu’s relative obscurity as a philosopher to the fact that since he was “[m]ainly an orator at outdoor rallies, there is little written record of the Albizuan philosophy.”[9] His virtual anonymity among US scholars also stems from the fact that he was a political dissident who was targeted by the FBI, which made it dangerous for scholars to write about or cite him.[10] To find his philosophy we need to read the works of his commentators and delve into the volumes of opinion pieces and editorials he published in periodicals across the Americas that have been carefully archived by later

generations of Puerto Rican scholars and historians. We need to examine both the particular arguments that Albizu makes against US imperialism in Puerto Rico as well as the intellectual sources of these arguments because, as Stevens-Arroyo states, “a philosophic analysis of the sources of Albizu’s thought has been missing from the general debate.”[11]

Because of his strident resistance to US imperialism, Albizu’s political philosophy might appear to be a straightforward instance of *Arielismo*: the cultural movement named after Enrique Rodó’s hugely influential 1900 work *Ariel*. Rodó analyzed Latin America’s condition after the end of the Spanish American War and warned Latin America to safeguard its sophisticated and humane Ibero-American culture against the vulgar threats of Anglo-American commercialism and imperialism.[12] *Ariel* crystalized a vision of an existential hemispheric cultural *agon* that catalyzed a political tradition of Ibero-American solidarity and independence articulated by thinkers like José Martí and José Vasconcelos who argued for an autonomous Latin American union or confederacy in response to US imperialism.

It is reasonable to associate Albizu with Rodó’s work, especially since Albizu salutes *Arielismo* in his 1934 essay “The Banner of the Race” when he praised Rodó for his “prescient vision of an Ibero-American union.”[13] We also see Rodó’s influence on Albizu in the four political goals for which Albizu advocated in numerous treatises:

1. The immediate restoration of the Republic of Puerto Rico.
2. The establishment of a Confederacy of the Antilles, including Haiti.
3. An Ibero-American Union.
4. A hegemony of Ibero-American Nations in the New World.[14]

While Rodó and Martí wrote at the turn of century, Albizu advocated for a Latin American confederation of free republics a generation after Martí’s famous prophecy from *Nuestra America* – that the Caribbean’s “formidable neighbor” might one day lay it’s hands on Cuba and other Caribbean nations—had already come to pass.[15] While he was largely a kindred spirit of *Arielistas*, Albizu’s political project was both more specific and urgent than those of his contemporaries. Albizu did not write about a *looming* threat on the northern horizon as Uruguayan Rodó did in 1900 or Cuban Martí did years before the Spanish American War. Albizu lived in a sovereign nation *actively suffering* violent occupation and pillage by a foreign nation whose presence in Puerto Rico was, in Albizu’s eyes, not merely politically unjust but spiritually profane and heretical.

Albizu sought to rouse his fellow Puerto Ricans from their complacency and alert them to the folly of submitting to colonialism using a Socratic wit reminiscent of earlier Ibero-American luminaries. Rodó humorously chided Latin Americans for falling prey to *nordomania* – a dangerous infatuation with all things from the United States—after the trauma of 1898.[16] Martí ridiculed fellow Cubans who held their own country in such low esteem that they sought instead to emulate the French or the Spanish: “if they are

Parisians or Madrileños then let them stroll to the Prado by lamplight or go to Tortoni’s for [a sherbet]!”[17] Martí doubtlessly would have smiled if he read that in the 1930’s Albizu attributed Cuba’s arrested political ascent within the Americas to the related disorder of *yancofilia*. [18] Albizu scoffed at fellow Puerto Ricans whom he deemed too eager to accept the colonizer’s assertion that Puerto Rico is now part of the United States. “The other day, in San Juan, some university boys who were very self-satisfied in their own wisdom were asked by a fish vendor directions to Cerro de Guilarte, and these self-proclaimed university doctors did not know where it was. They did know where Mt. McKinley was, where to find Washington, New York, Montana and Idaho – which I call the garlic clove of the United States—but they didn’t know how to find Guilarte. And that, gentlemen, is the result of the ignorance that has lived within our community for thirty years.”[19] Instead of studying their colonizer’s geography, Albizu urged in his 1933 “Discourse on ‘The Day of the Race’” that his audience understand their present situation in light of the history of their race.

### Albizu Campos’ Spiritual Vision of Race

Early in his “Discourse on ‘The Day of the Race’” he anticipates counter-arguments against the very idea of celebrating a day in honor of the Ibero-American race. He lists all the races of the people of the Americas, seeming to erode his own argument *ad absurdum*. He then rhetorically asks “to which race do we refer?”[21] He answers that the race he celebrates is certainly not “a structure of the epidermis” since dividing people by skin color is a kind of stupidity that “only occurs to the brutish North Americans.”[22] He then distinguishes the Latin American concept of race from the US biological racial hierarchy. “How different, sirs, is our situation from that of the Yankees! How very different! How different is barbarism from civilization!”[23]

When he alludes to the difference between Yankee barbarism and Latin American civilization, Albizu seems, again, to borrow the same rhetorical frame from by Rodó’s *Ariel* that Vasconcelos used in *La Raza Cosmica*, as when he wrote “[o]ur age became, and continues to be, a conflict of Latinism against Anglo-Saxonism; a conflict of institutions, aims and ideals.”[24] All three adhere to the belief that Latin America is the true inheritor, through Spain, of Greco-Roman civilization while the Yankees of the United States are the militarily adept but culturally stunted inheritors of brutish and exclusionary Anglo-Saxonism.[25] This rhetorical frame offered a crucial rejoinder to the Darwinian, progress-centered discourse of the US occupation, which depicted the people of Puerto Rico as not so much uncivilized, but as a people held back from liberal and scientific progress by Spanish mores.

We find a clear example of the Anglo-Saxon ideology that Albizu sought to counter in the work of R.A. Middeldyk and Martin Brumbaugh, who were commissioned by the occupying US authorities to write in 1903 a history of Puerto Rico with the clear propagandistic purpose of framing the US occupation of the island nation as a benevolent act of modernization. “These people [of Puerto Rico] do not suffer from the lack of civilization. They suffer from the kind of civilization they have endured. The life of

the people is static. Her institutions and customs are so set upon them that one is most impressed with the absence of legitimate activities...Under the military government of the United States much was done to prepare the way for future advance...It did for the people what they should learn to do for themselves...The outlook of the people is now infinitely better than ever before.”[26] Albizu rejected US pretensions of colonial authority and parental munificence that depicted Puerto Rico as a child in need of education from a wiser North American parent. Instead, Albizu argued that Puerto Rico more like a far-flung outpost of Roman civilization besieged by brutish Germanic hordes who were driven by greed, not generosity. “Two thousand years have passed since the days of Roman civilization, and we still must contend against the barbarians. We face the United States whose first act was to dispossess us from our own land.”[27]

Albizu juxtaposes the Yankee vision of race, with its codified and violently enforced white-supremacist hierarchy, to the Ibero-American vision of race, which he describes as a spiritual and cultural unity that transcends skin color and ethnicity.

[G]entlemen, it is for brutes to erect divisions between men based on skin. This only occurs to the brutish North Americans. They are a savage people. If only they realized that they were! But civilized peoples, the original peoples, live always in the immanent unity that God has placed upon all men [and...] the indestructible unity of man. These people see skin color as an accident and that the blondest man of bluest eyes and most handsome face as well as the most attractive Black man of the most vibrant eyes and powerful physique could just as easily be bloodthirsty or saintly. What matters is what they bear in their spirit, what they bear in their soul: that is what separates man from beast.[28]

Albizu sees the Ibero-American people as an amalgamated race bound by a common culture and a shared history that transcends the biological conception of race in the North. Indeed, in his 1935 essay “The Concept of Race” (*Concepto de la Raza*), he explicitly rejects a biological notion of race. “For [Latin American people] race never has anything to do with biology nor dusky complexion or dark eyes. Race is a perpetuation of virtues and defining institutions. We distinguish ourselves by our culture, our values, our nobility and our catholic sense of culture.”[29] The cultural elements that bind together the Latin American people are, for Rodó, Vasconcelos and Albizu alike, Greco-Roman culture and Judeo-Christianity morality. Albizu even shares Vasconcelos’ belief that the Ibero-American race is a dynamic entity in a state of becoming collectively striving towards a spiritual destiny. To this extent, we can read him alongside Du Bois and Vasconcelos who developed, in the well-crafted words of Juliet Hooker, “anti-colonial mestizo futurisms [that] were central to envisioning a post-racist world that was yet-to-be.”[30] Vasconcelos famously argued that “the so-called Latin peoples” were destined to fulfill humanity’s destiny as “the synthetic race that shall gather all the treasures of History in order to give expression to universal desire.”[31] Albizu similarly argues for a kind of mestizo futurism when he prophecies that the Ibero-American race will fulfill a universal human telos: “The race, gentlemen, follows the transformation of a

people under the guidance of spirit—a transformation of skin, sentiment, and thought—according to a fundamental set of ideals that informs every facet of life and every transcendent act. It is for that reason that the Ibero-American race exists.”[32]

However, while Albizu’s view of race is largely commensurate with those of other prominent Latin American anti-colonial thinkers of his era, he was also an intellectual island unto himself. Stevens-Arroyo accounts for his distinctiveness by writing that since “he had lived outside of Latin America in his formative years, Albizu had acquired a perspective on nationalism, culture, and race that was not represented in the Latin American discourse at that time.”[33] We best discern this subtle but significant difference when we attend to the transcendent and catholic (in the literal sense of “universal”) element of his conception of race, as when he speaks proudly of the three kinds of blood that mingle within the Ibero-American race: African, Indian and white. “We are a people who are predestined for historical significance for Puerto Rico is the first nation of the world where spiritual unity is formed within a biological unity of the body.”[34] This idea that Latin America shares a racio-spiritual unity might sound like a straightforward reference to Vasconcelos’s idea of a cosmic race that will unify the world through hybridity. However, Ricardo Mariani Ríos reminds us that Albizu’s concept of race is the heart of a political emancipatory project that is both radically anti-colonial yet conservatively Catholic. “At a logico-epistemic level, “The Day of the Race” constitutes for Albizu Campos the ultimate Christian event in that it is in Puerto Rico that humanity discovers the possibility of conceiving a common humanity and universe without racial distinctions. That is to say, for Albizu Campos, civilization belongs to those communities where human beings preserve our God-given and indestructible ‘emanating unity,’ not to those who divide themselves according to skin color like animals.”[35] Albizu’s radical anti-colonial philosophy was not grounded in Marxism (as alleged by the US authorities that hounded him), distain for Anglo-American positivism or even *Arielismo*, but instead centuries-old Catholic political thought. While a glimmer of this philosophy is present in the works of Rodó and Vasconcelos, Catholic political doctrine shines for Albizu as his unwavering North Star.[36]

### **Albizu Campos’ Radical Catholic Nationalism**

Angered by Albizu’s successful lawsuits on behalf of Puerto Rican farm workers against unfair wage practices on US owned sugar plantations, as well as his unequivocal public proclamations that Puerto Rico was a sovereign nation, US authorities spent decades defaming Albizu as a madman and a dangerous communist radical.[37] While he certainly was a grave threat to US imperialism and economic exploitation of Puerto Rico, he was no communist. As Victor Villanueva explains, “Although there is common sentiment that Albizu Campos was a communist, like Cuba’s revolutionary leader, Albizu was politically very conservative. Albizu believed that Puerto Rico’s cultural ways should remain loyal to the cultural ideals of Spain and that those ideals are best reflected in Roman Catholicism. In other words, Albizu was a Christian Democrat who believed that Puerto Rico should be free.”[38] We need to see Albizu’s Catholic nationalist political philosophy in its religious context to fully appreciate its



distinctive contribution to political philosophy of the Americas: why it was both politically radical yet deeply conservative in its adherence to Pre-Enlightenment Catholic doctrine; why it was similar to and allied with more familiar strains of Latin American anti-colonial thought (like those developed by Rodó, Martí and Vasconcelos) yet completely distinct from them in its assiduous adherence to Catholic doctrine; how it was a liberatory and anti-colonial Catholic political project and therefore akin to later Liberation Theology but at the same time was a potentially reactionary political movement that looked back nostalgically at Spanish colonialism and hoped to return to a Catholic hegemony.

Carlos Rojas Osorio argues that the Roman Catholic understanding of nationalism serves as the “source concept (*concepto matriz*) of Albizu’s political cosmology.” Albizu draws from foundational Catholic treatises such as Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* and Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae* to advance a Neo-Thomistic argument that a nation is a divinely ordained body that finds its source and purpose in God: he even offers up the following prayer: “God, creator and protector of nations [...], man is powerless to destroy your divine works.”[40] Far from being a practical necessity designed to imperfectly protect an individual’s right to life, liberty and property as argued by Protestant political thinkers like John Locke, a nation, according to Albizu’s Roman Catholic political theory, was “not merely the ethical, cultural and religious unity of a human society, but also the communion of their material interests within a determined territory of which their children will be lords and masters.”[41] A nation is therefore a divinely designed gift given by God to a particular human community for the purpose of satisfying their material needs and living their lives according to God’s plan. Albizu’s overflowing zeal for God’s gift of the nation of Puerto Rico led him to somewhat heretically exclaim: “We love and adore our fatherland [*patria*] like a goddess! The smallest mote of its soil is a sacred thing, and we won’t allow foreign hands to profane it.”[42]

The work of Stevens-Arroyo offers a charitable perspective on Albizu’s Catholic nationalism that helps us see his connection to the long tradition of Catholic political philosophy. He explains that Albizu’s Catholic philosophy “was grounded in the principles that had been first enunciated by the Schoolmen of the Spanish Renaissance,” especially the Catalan priest and philosopher Jaime Balmes (1810-1841).[43] “The themes of Balmes are repeated again and again in [Albizu’s] writing and speeches: civilization, culture, nobility of women, international rights, the question of civil authority, revolt, etc. Of great importance is the way that Balmes linked ethos with religion through Scholastic philosophy.”[44] Father Jaime Balmes was an influential Spanish theologian, philosopher and political theorist who combined Thomistic philosophy as articulated by late Spanish Scholastic thinkers like Francisco Suárez with the burgeoning tradition of Scottish common sense philosophy (*el sentido común*) that was widely embraced by Jesuit and other Catholic thinkers in early 19th Century France and Spain.[45] Kelly James Clark explains that many Catholic thinkers of Balmes’ era “embraced common sense philosophy both because of their spirituality and their discomfort with the skeptical excesses of post-Cartesian philosophy. The Catholic intellectual tradition itself, as a particular juncture of its development, found it

appropriate to embrace a Reidian [the common sense philosophy of the Scottish thinker Thomas Reid] type of epistemology.”[46]

Albizu followed Balmes by rejecting the citizen-centered theories of nationalism used by English-language, Protestant thinkers like John Locke. According to Balmes’ Catholic nationalism, the Free Republic of Puerto Rico was not as aggregation of sovereign individuals, but a single political body sanctified and ordained by God. Stevens-Arroyo shows us that Albizu follows Suárez’s argument in *De Legibus* that a citizen’s relationship to their nation is not “a fiduciary trust analogous to a business arrangement” but a “sacred bond” like a consecrated matrimonial union.[47] For Albizu, the only relevant context to consider when discussing Puerto Rico during his lifetime was its status as a colonial subject of the United States, a foreign power who denied the nation’s freedom just as it defamed its culture and desecrated its faith. Stevens-Arroyo recounts that at the time that Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States “the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico had been rudely disestablished in 1898...The arriving Americans, Catholic and Protestant alike, saw little influence of institutional Catholicism over the religious practices of most Puerto Ricans.”[49] After the US occupied Puerto Rico, the Catholic hierarchy on the island, most notably the German-born Rev. James Blenk who was appointed Bishop of Puerto Rico in 1899, became “convinced that Catholicism should be an agent of Americanization.”[49] Thus, a Catholic hierarchy dominated by foreign born clergy worked hand in glove with US-dictated reforms of the public school system (including the criminalization of discussing Puerto Rican independence and the flying of the Puerto Rican flag) to dissolve Puerto Rican political identity and facilitate its transition to a colony of the US.[50] Albizu Campos’ political theology was both deeply conservative in its orthodoxy yet fiercely radical in its praxis. As such, it was at loggerheads with the established Catholic Church in Puerto Rico which was at its nadir in terms of its religious fervor and was used by officials on the island to dull the suffering of the Puerto Rican people as they were forced to adjust to life under a new foreign colonial authority. Albizu’s Catholic nationalism emerged from “[a] new Puerto Rican Nationalist rhetoric that identified Puerto Rican Catholicism with Puerto Rican culture. To attack one was to attack the other. More importantly, this new mode of discourse shaped a militant aggressiveness that challenged the premise of U.S. hegemony, namely that Protestantism was the only faith compatible with U.S. rule.”[51]

The issue of militancy leads us to address one of the most interesting facets of Albizu’s Catholic nationalism, namely its source. When Albizu first attended Harvard, his Catholicism had lapsed, but Stevens-Arroyo points out that “[w]e see in Albizu a Masonic Free-Thinker in 1912, but by 1915 he professed a militant Catholicism.”[52] Stevens-Arroyo and Luis Angel Ferrao both contend that Albizu’s reconnection with his faith came about, in part, because of his very active involvement in the Irish movement for independence.[53] While Balmes was Albizu’s greatest theological influence, Albizu was introduced to Balmes’ work by the figure who was his greatest influence in terms of praxis, namely the Irish revolutionary James Connolly, who “wrote a guide to urban warfare and organized the Irish Citizen’s Army to implement it.[54] Anthony de Jesús explains the unique role of the Irish revolution in Albizu’s political philosophy, noting that,

“[t]he Irish struggle for independence deeply resonated for Albizu Campos and was consistent with his Catholic and Balmsian outlook on the political future of Puerto Rico. While a student at Harvard Law School, Albizu Campos organized a pro-Irish demonstration and led in the organizing of a Harvard chapter for the recognition of the Irish Republic. In 1919, when Eamon de Valera [who would later be the first *Taoiseach* or Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland] spoke at Harvard seeking support for Irish independence, it was Albizu Campos who introduced him.”[55] This resonance between the Catholic anti-colonial struggles of Ireland and the similar efforts in Puerto Rico would remain throughout Albizu’s life. When we was President of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico in the 1930’s, Albizu modeled its youth division – the Cadets of the Republic – on similar groups in Ireland.[56] Further, Albizu followed earlier Irish Catholic rebels against colonialism who took to heart Balmes’ argument that the “armed defense of the nation was a duty imposed by the just war theory. If a tyrant attempted to take the life of the nation by denying its language, customs, and freedom, then the just war response allowed violence against the tyrant and his minions.[57] Therefore, while Albizu raised his voice against U.S. colonialization alongside Rodó, Martí and Vasconcelos, he alone did so as a devout Catholic defending his faith against Protestant heretics.

As Mariani Ríos explains, Albizu’s Catholic nationalism was a form of “semiotic resistance” against colonial ideology that was “based on Roman Catholic ideals as an antithesis to the Protestant ideas of nation inoculated into Puerto Rican society.”[58] Catholic political theory enabled him to argue that the problem was not that Puerto Rico was a primitive nation in need of benevolent US instruction but that the Protestant and utilitarian US was a prodigal child who had strayed from the humane teachings of God’s one, true Church. For Albizu the ultimate proof that the US should be learning, not dictating, civility was the fact that white supremacist racism was the law of the land in the US but anathema to Puerto Rico. “There is no Christianity in the United States. It is for that reason that the Yankees, when they see a Black person sitting where they think he shouldn’t be sitting, simply tie him to the back of the bus and drag him, as if to say ‘see what you’ll get?’[59]

### **Critiques of Albizu’s Catholic Nationalism**

This essay argues that Albizu’s political philosophy bears reexamination both for the sake of a fuller account of the history of ideas of the Americas and for a deeper understanding of the effects of US colonialism in Puerto Rico and the rest of Latin America. However, it does not assert that for all his piety, Albizu was faultless either as a human being or as a political theorist. Like any political philosopher, his arguments have earned critics and supporters alike. Therefore, in order to accurately evaluate his political philosophy we need to balance the charitable assessments from the previous section with ones that are more critical. Some of the most insightful critiques of Albizu’s political philosophy were advanced by later generations of Puerto Rican philosophers and historians who contended with the effects of his legacy on political and cultural discussions in Puerto Rico for decades after his death.

The critiques of Albizu’s political philosophy leveled by Puerto Rican historians and cultural theorists cluster around three related areas. First, his nationalism either ignores, minimizes or apologizes for the Native genocide, African slavery and political injustices wrought by Spanish and Catholic colonialists in the Americas. Second, his nationalism imagines within Puerto Rico a fictitious cultural homogeneity and Catholic essence that erases the actual pluralism, complexity and diversity of the people of Puerto Rico. Third, Albizu’s political philosophy was not in fact a revolutionary anti-colonialist movement directed towards democratic community or political autonomy, but instead a reactionary Catholic anti-Protestant movement modeled both on guerrilla, anti-colonialist groups like the IRA, but also on conservative fascist groups in Spain and Italy which sought to crush political dissent or democratic community in the name of national health and purity.

Earlier in this essay we recalled Albizu’s stalwart insistence that the invading Yankees could hardly civilize Puerto Rico as they claimed to be doing, since Puerto Rico was in fact a bastion of Spanish civilization beset by waves of Germanic hordes from the US. He urged his readers not to be intimidated by the recent rise of Anglo-Saxon North America because, “we were the ones, who, with blood and fire, the cross of the sword and the sword of the cross, gave to ancient Europe and virgin America the traditions of virtue, valor, honor, sacrifice, contempt for death and material goods that make our race the world’s only hope.”[60] When faced with accounts of Spanish corruption and decadence, like those advanced by the United States, Albizu retorted that Spain was the source of humanity’s greatest virtues. In so doing, Albizu Campos was akin to a 20th century Bernardo de Vargas Machau, the 16th Century Spanish adventurer and military leader who rejected Bartolomé de las Casas’ harsh criticism of Spanish colonialism in his work *Milicia y descripción de las Indias* (*The Indian Militia and Description of the Indies*). While *Indian Militia* is a terrible tome, since it is an early manual of the European genocidal tactics that would be used against indigenous peoples of the Americas, it was at least honest about the fact that the Spanish were in America to conquer and colonize. Where Albizu gives us platitudes about the cross of the sword and the sword of the cross, the first plate of Vargas Machuca’s book shows the author arrayed in his conquistador panoply looming over a map of the Americas next to the inscription: “*A la espada y el compas, mas y mas y mas y mas*” (“To the sword and the compass, more and more and more and more”).[61]

Albizu’s *hispanofilia* often leads him to make disturbing and less than commendable statements. One such example has to do with his extremely uncritical praise for Christopher Columbus. In many ways his “Discourse on the Day of the Race” is an encomium of Christopher Columbus as the “Day of the Race” was celebrated on October 12th, which commemorates Columbus’ arrival in the New World. For Albizu, the love of Puerto Rico, Spain and Columbus were tightly intertwined saying, “[w]e, gentlemen, remember [Christopher Columbus,] the man who was the instrument of this immense work just as we remember the motherland of Spain.”[62] Even more, “We, the nationalists of Puerto Rico, venerate with pride, approval, fervor, and reverence the

majesty of his name, that great figure, the excelsior figure of The Navigator whose excellence is enshrined in the history of the world.”[63] Even if we are mindful to adjust for the Black Legend which sought to condemn the Spanish alone for European genocide against Native peoples, it is still undoubtedly the case that Albizu’s *hispanofilia* leads him erroneously praise Columbus as a paragon of moral excellence, when in fact he was a person who was far more vice-ridden than virtuous and who knowingly committed atrocities against indigenous peoples of the Americas, including the Taíno inhabitants of Borinquen, as Puerto Rico was called by its original people. Albizu denies the genocide of Native Caribbean people that Columbus started in favor of the risibly rosy picture of Native Americans seamlessly and peacefully incorporating into Spanish civilization, with the “*caciques* [Taíno rulers] elevated to the level of princes under the Spanish crown.”[65]

Another lamentable element of Albizu’s *apologia* of Spanish colonialism is a strain of anti-Islamic prejudice that is all too recognizable today. During his recitation of what he sees as Spain’s unbroken millennia of civilization, he addresses the issue of the Muslim control of the majority of the Iberian Peninsula for seven centuries and its establishment of the Caliphate of Córdoba. Contrary to the overwhelming historical consensus that the artistic, scientific and philosophical advances of the Renaissance would have been impossible without the cultural interchange fostered in great Muslim cities of Spain, Albizu simply denies it ever happened.[66] He flatly states, “The Saracens – contrary to all that is said in history, contrary to the false history fabricated to discredit the historical greatness of Spain—brought no civilization to Spain.”[67] In Albizu’s fight against the lies of US colonialism that threatened to obliterate Puerto Rico’s authentic memory of itself, he helps himself to the lies of Spanish colonialism. He either won’t or can’t see that Spain first colonized itself by obliterating and distorting the history of Islam and Arab culture in Europe and then colonized the Americas by obliterating the memory of indigenous civilizations and their genocide. This prejudice is not just a sad reminder that even great and visionary people suffer from intellectual and moral blind spots, but is also a reminder of the terrible power of colonialism.

Another critic of Albizu’s conservative radicalism is José Luis Gonzáles whose 1989 book *El país de cuatro pisos* (The Four-Story Country) excoriates Albizu’s political philosophy as wrong-headed and fabulist. Gonzáles argues that Albizu’s brand of nationalism pales compared to the far more pluralistic and sustainable nationalist philosophies of earlier Puerto Rican political activists such as Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827-1898), Segundo Ruiz Belvis (1829-1867) and the great Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903). These earlier movements for Puerto Rican nationalism bore far greater emancipatory promise by being “anti-racist, anti-monarchical and anti-clerical.”[68] Gonzáles contends that Albizu’s *hispanofilia* hampered his ability to see the realities of Spanish colonialism in Puerto Rico and led him to betray the truly revolutionary spirit of the 19th Century Puerto Rican nationalists who wanted a free Puerto Rico (indeed, a free American hemisphere) emancipated from the domination of any empire. Gonzáles points out that, “[f]or Hostos...what Spanish colonial regime left behind in Puerto Rico was a society where ‘one lived under the providence of

barbarism’; barely three decades later, Albizu defined the same social reality as “that old, collective happiness.”[69] Gonzalés praises Albizu for being “without a doubt, the most coherent and consequential proponent of conservative ideology”[70] and for his commitment to speak for the dispossessed people of Puerto Rico.[71] But for all his eloquence and piety, his political philosophy is hopelessly flawed by “its idealization – better said distortion – of history.”[72] Ultimately, “the mythical and mystical fatherland of which Albizu spoke never existed.”[73]

A second critique of Albizu’s political philosophy leveled by critics in Puerto Rico is that it rests on a reified and fetishized notion of authentic Puerto Rican identity. Critics contend that Albizu’s Catholic nationalism evolved into a brand of Puerto Rican neo-nationalism marked by a kind of cultural Manicheanism. Carlos Pabón examined this legacy in his essay “*De Albizu a Madonna: para armar y desarmar la nacionalidad*” (“From Albizu to Madonna: to Arm and Disarm Nationalism”). It uses the furore triggered by the pop singer Madonna when she allegedly desecrated the Puerto Rican flag during a concert on October 26, 1993 in Bayamón. Pabón uses this moment to lampoon the Albizuist rhetoric of the Puerto Rican elected officials who were calling for the singer’s harsh punishment, since their view, “[r]educes our nationality to an essence that is either ethnic (Hispanic) or linguistic (Spanish). It is a discourse that postulates a nationhood that is homogenous and hispanofilic within nationalist imagination that erases all others, eliminates difference and excludes the immense majority of Puerto Ricans.”[74] Pabón hypothesizes, tongue in cheek, that Albizuist neo-nationalists are so obsessed with protecting a supposed essence of Puerto Ricanism that if they were able, they would create a special police force, like the one from Ridley Scott’s dystopian *Blade Runner* films, charged with hunting down and eliminating insufficiently authentic Puerto Ricans who threatened to dilute that which was “authentically Puerto Rican.”[75] Against Albizu’s fiery calls to protect the sacred purity of the Puerto Rican Motherland, Pabón contends that to be Puerto Rican – indeed, to be anyone in a globalized world—is to be inexorably and inevitably hybridized. Therefore, the people of Puerto Rico are not authentically the *jibaro* (the subsistence farmer of the mountains often invoked as the symbol of Puerto Rican authenticity), “we are CNN, MTV, Pepsi, MacDonald’s, Walmart, Citibank, Visa and MasterCard. We are Michael Jackson and Madonna, Disney, Orlando, the South Bronx, Levittown, the Country Club and undocumented Dominican immigrants.”[76] According to critics like Pabón, Albizu’s project is a dead-end: he seeks to preserve a pure Puerto Rican culture when in fact “contemporary culture is hybrid and globalized within which the traditional and the contemporary don’t just co-exist but intersect and intermingle.”[77]

Finally, critics contend that Albizu’s political philosophy is neither revolutionary nor pluralistic, but was part of a specific reactionary movement of Catholic anti-democratic fascism. We find the most forceful version of this critique of Albizu’s Catholic nationalism in *Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo Puertorriqueño* by Luis Angel Ferrao. Angel paints a portrait of Albizu as a kind of 20th Century Augustine of Hippo. Both men strayed from their Catholicism in their youth: where Augustine dallied in Manicheanism and Neo-Platonism as a young man, Angel argues that Albizu became

sympathetic to anti-clericalism, political liberalism and possibly even Freemasonry due to the fact that his hometown of Ponce was “of all the cities and towns in Puerto Rico... the one most open to the influence of religious and intellectual currents contrary to Catholicism.”[78] However, just as Augustine returned as an adult to the faith of his childhood with redoubled missionary fervor that branded any other religion or philosophy as heresy, so Albizu returned to a staunch and deeply dogmatic Catholicism during his time at Harvard.[79] Angel further warrants that Albizu’s Puerto Rican and Catholic nationalism was deeply influenced by the Catholic political philosophy motivating the Irish Republican Army.

However, Angel points out that there was a fundamental error in trying to develop an IRA-style political movement in Puerto Rico. “Compared with the ancient Catholic and Christian sensibilities in Ireland which are more than a millennia old, we can say that the Catholic faith in Puerto Rico was forced to mature too quickly over four centuries due to its long relationship with the Spanish colonial state which amplified its reach through statute.”[80] Angel argued that Albizu’s Catholic nationalism never caught on in Puerto Rico because “the cultural and educational efforts of the Church communicated through religious communities and religious orders... was qualitatively and quantitatively inferior [in Puerto Rico] to what it achieved in other parts of Hispanic America during the colonial period, let alone in Ireland over 1,500 years of Christian civilization.”[81] In other words, Puerto Rico was not nearly as uniformly or piously Catholic as Albizu imagined it to be.

The fact that Albizu’s Catholic piety caused him to minimize the cultural and religious diversity of his country, leads us to the most damning facet of his political philosophy, namely its close association with fascism. Lewis Gordon’s *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* argues that the nascent New Deal programs in Puerto Rico were sabotaged by “the resurgence of the Creole Fascist-Nationalist movement led by the fanatical genius of Pedro Albizu Campos...interested not so much in a genuine struggle for democratic independence as in fomenting a neo-fascist attack upon democracy itself.”[82] Angel exactly warrants Gordon’s contention by pointing out that Albizu’s Corps of Cadets were modeled not just on the IRA, but also on paramilitary groups in Fascist Spain and Italy.[83] Further, many of the periodicals of Albizu’s political party copied or re-printed Falangist propaganda from Franco’s fascist regime in Spain.[84]

In his efforts to counter-balance the narrative that sought to legitimate the ongoing violence of the United States against the people of Puerto Rico, Albizu overplayed his hand by ignoring, minimizing and distorting the historical realities of the brutality of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. Further, while Albizu’s political philosophy sought to defend the rights and human dignity of the people of Puerto Rico, he did so under the assumption that the people of Puerto Rico were essentially a Catholic people. Ultimately, his political philosophy – while motivated by a literally catholic *qua* universal humanism – was nonetheless anti-democratic, patriarchal and culturally homogeneous.

## The Contemporary Significance of Albizuan Philosophy

Despite its shortcomings, the uniqueness of Albizu’s radical Catholic nationalism combined with its nearly complete absence from the philosophical literature warrants its further study for academic reasons alone. In a field where it is not uncommon for academics to write commentaries on canonical figures who have been exhaustively studied for centuries, the study of Latin American philosophical figures offers academic philosophers the opportunity to examine figures that are so rarely taught in university philosophy classes that they are effectively brand new. More importantly, such a study helps to correct the severe myopia that has led academic philosophers to all but ignore contributions from Latin American thinkers. Albizu’s use of Balmes’ Neo-Thomistic political theory to warrant Puerto Rican sovereignty and Catholic nationalism fostered a unique form of Latin American anti-colonialism that complicates the common historical narrative about the history of philosophy in Latin America, where Aztec and indigenous philosophies were stamped out by Catholic Scholasticism, which was supplanted by Independence philosophy that gave way to Positivism which was then rejected by the vitalist philosophies of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*.<sup>[85]</sup> Instead, Albizu developed one of the most radical political philosophies of 20th century Latin America –radical in that it rejected the white-supremacist and progress-focused liberal ideology used by the US to justify the occupation of Puerto Rico and galvanized a political movement that sought to overthrow the US government on the island nation—by reaching beyond the age of independence philosophies to the Scholastic era. Further, Albizu’s Catholic nationalism and its commensurate advocacy of armed resistance against US occupation of Puerto Rico according to the *jus bellum iustum* (that has been a part of the Catholic intellectual tradition since Augustine’s *City of God*) was a form of radical liberatory Christian praxis that was overshadowed by Liberation Theology. Academics of American philosophy could explore whether there were other Latin American political movements motivated by Balmes’ work, or other Catholic political theorists that predate the *nouvelle théologie* of the mid-20th Century that were lost in Liberation Theology’s shadow. Tracing Albizu’s philosophical roots to Jaime Balmes speaks to the longevity and political impact of a Catholic counter-tradition of political philosophy that challenged the individualist and contractarian assumptions supporting the works of English Protestant thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Hobbes that is rarely included in the syllabi of Modern Philosophy classes.

Further, the nexus of connections linking Pedro Albizu Campos in Puerto Rico, Irish revolutionaries like James Connolly organizing in Europe and the Americas, and Spanish Theologians like Jaime Balmes highlights the relationship between Ireland and Ibero-American civilization.<sup>[87]</sup> This aspect of his work reveals a uniquely nuanced account of the Irish at home and in the Americas that corrects the common error of grouping the Irish in with “Anglos” and deepens the already complex history of the Irish in the Americas and their relationship to whiteness and colonialism.<sup>[88]</sup> The fact that Albizu learned of the Spanish political theorist Balmes through Irish political radicals becomes all the more fascinating when we note that Balmes was himself influenced by



earlier Irish political activists like “The Liberator” Daniel O’Connell! Stevens-Arroyo gives us a sense of this rich web of cultural interconnections when he points out that Balmes, “inserted citations from the speeches of Irish patriots such as Daniel O’Connell and Daniel O’Callaghan into his text to demonstrate the hypocrisy of Protestant claims that they had brought about Enlightenment and democracy while they denied Ireland its freedom. Balmes’s favorable opinion of Ireland’s self-determination in the nineteenth century made him a favorite of Irish Catholic patriots in the early twentieth century. Thus, Terence McSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork who died in 1920 after a hunger strike while in prison for protesting the Black and Tans, repeatedly cited Balmes.”[89] The saddest and final connection between Albizu’s struggle for a free Republic of Puerto Rico and the struggle for an Irish Republic is that Terence McSwiney’s torture at the hands of the British and death in prison in 1920 foreshadowed Albizu’s death in 1965 after more than a quarter of a century of imprisonment and likely torture for alleged crimes against the US.[90] The story of his radicalization and political awakening by meeting James Connolly and Eamon de Valera reminds us of the extent to which the Irish sought and established networks of solidarity with other peoples living under colonial rule. Albizu’s work thus recalls the history of Irish freedom fighters in Latin American such as Simon Bolivar’s general Daniel Florence O’Leary, Saint Patrick’s Brigade in the Mexican-American War and even Alejandro O’Reilly, the founder of Puerto Rico’s first militia.[91] At the same time, the story of his persecution, torture, imprisonment and death reminds us of the shameful ease with which many Irish-Americans – like the deeply corrupt US governor of Puerto Rico from 1921-1923 Emmet Montgomery Reily –enforced white-supremacist policies in Puerto Rico and mocked their ancestors’ struggle for freedom by serving as agents of repression on behalf of a larger Protestant nation bent on the unjust subjugation of a smaller, Catholic island nation.

As academically fascinating and unexamined as his work might be, Puerto Rico’s dire crisis remains the greatest impetus to recover and heed Albizu’s forcibly silenced voice. Recovering his work provides vital context for Puerto Rico’s current disastrous and unlivable predicament. While no one could stop the cataclysmic destruction of Hurricane Maria that ravaged the Puerto Rico and Dominica in September 2017, his work reminds us that the economic, political and humanitarian catastrophes that preceded and followed the hurricane were chapters in a long history of human-made travesty, abuse and neglect suffered by the people of Puerto Rico. While Albizu’s radical Catholic nationalism remains deeply controversial, his voice needs to be included in the conversation since, as Juan Manuel Carrión reminds us, “in the colony [of] Puerto Rico ...Albizu still represents a forceful challenge to the very fabric of the colonial political order.”[92]

Albizu spoke clearly and forcefully about the fact that the people of Puerto Rico were not poor because they lacked Protestantism or scientific progress, as was the conceit of the US occupiers. They were poor because the US was robbing them through land take-overs, corrupt banks and unjust trade laws that allowed usurious lending as well as the corporate expropriation of wealth off the island. Albizu plainly described the

legalized theft of Puerto Rican wealth in June 30, 1934 letter to *El Mundo* published before a visit by President Roosevelt. “Trapped within the Yankee tariff siege, Puerto Rico has completely lost any possibility of a favorable balance in trade, sending away to Yankee coffers a sum that amounts to over \$400,000,000 US [which is approximately \$7.47 billion in 2018 dollars] [93] over the last 34 years. Within the regime of this commercial Yankee monopoly, we are obliged to sell at the price imposed on us by our enemy and to buy at the price they dictate. Conservative estimates show that these policies have cost Puerto Rico over \$600,000,000 US [or \$11.2 billion in 2018 dollars] for the same period.”[94] He also predicted that treating Puerto Rico as a colony (that is, neither a free country nor a state fully included in the Union) while simultaneously offering the people of Puerto Rico US citizenship would undermine any active resistance against this colonial occupation and lead to a mass exodus of its citizens: “When an empire offers citizenship to the natural citizens of an invaded nation it, is done for the deliberate purpose of fragmenting any collective resistance.”[95] After a lifetime of active public intellectualism and political activism he left volumes of speeches and essays wherein he predicted how many of the island’s current crises would follow inevitably from its untenable colonial status.[96] Just for Puerto Rico to return to the already dire situation of the Pre-Maria status quo would require enormous effort and investment: establishing a just and healthy condition would require even more resources, labor and imagination. It would also require a fundamental change in the governance of the island and its relationship with the US. In order for the people of Puerto Rico to thrive, the current colonial situation in Puerto Rico needs to be re-examined and critiqued from all possible perspectives, including Albizu’s.

Richard Rorty wrote in *Achieving our Country* that people need powerful stories that elicit the pride and shame in their nation: “Those who hope to persuade a nation to exert itself need to remind their country of what it can take pride in as well as what it should be ashamed of. They must tell inspiring stories about episodes and figures in the nation’s past – episodes and figures to which the country should remain true.”[97] Albizu’s story elicits both enormous pride and bitter shame, both of which are needed if Puerto Rico will ever be well. Albizu’s life elicits enormous pride, not just from the people of Puerto Rico and Latin America, devout Catholics and anti-colonialists, but from anyone who cares about freedom and admires exemplary moral courage. Stevens-Arroyo reminds us that despite the fact that Pedro Albizu Campos “was considered an unsuccessful politician on account of his Catholic principles, [he] reminds our nation of its unity, dignity, and permanent right to peace.[98] Stevens-Arroyo coined the phrase “the Argument of Grandeur” to describe Albizu’s use of Balmes’ Catholic philosophy to refute the idea that certain countries were insignificant because they were small. Stevens-Arroyo beautifully demonstrates how Albizu’s particular struggle for Puerto Rico’s independence was also a shining moment in the universal saga of humanity. Albizu’s “Argument of Grandeur,” “gave to Ireland – and Puerto Rico –a defense against the argument that these were island societies too small and insignificant to be independent. For Balmes, no culture was mere folklore. Once local traditions were filtered through Catholicism, they became a permanent part of human history and shared in the grandeur of the purest expression of world civilization.”[99] While religious

sensibilities have changed in the years since Albizu’s passing, making the island far less uniformly Catholic, he still offers to the people of Puerto Rico a model of brave patriotism and love of culture that would serve as an antidote to the American chauvinism that still denigrates the value of Puerto Rican culture. Albizu’s story could redouble the strained but powerful pride of the people of Puerto Rico who face nearly insurmountable challenges as they seek to restore the health of the nation they love so dear.

Recalling Albizu’s life also generates an important kind of shame on the part of US citizens unfamiliar with the violent and egregious story of how Puerto Rico became an involuntary “permanent possession” of the Land of the Free.[100] His story is just one of many that pierces the patriotic pretension that the US is morally superior to other world powers, and that we are the exception for standing always for freedom and equality. If the US really did stand for these ideals, we would revere Albizu for his unflinching defense of these ideals. In his early life Albizu was practically a poster child for the American dream: he worked and studied hard to pull himself out of poverty, excelled in his studies, gained admission to excellent schools including Harvard, served honorably in the military and started a family. He repeatedly eschewed the opportunity to become personally wealthy so that he might fight for freedom in America. Unfortunately for him, the American nation that he loved was under the thrall of a much larger American nation that had lost its way and forgotten its original disdain for imperial tyranny. Instead of recognizing Albizu as a 20th century George Washington or Simón Bolívar bravely standing up for the ideals US Americans supposedly revere, they saw him only as an inconvenient obstacle of empire and forcibly and shamefully silenced him. Albizu’s story recalls that the US has long faced an internal struggle between its egalitarian and democratic ideals and its imperial and avaricious vices. As Nelson Denis reminds us, “[t]he story of Albizu Campos is the story of Puerto Rico. It is also the story of empire. It starts a hundred years ago, when America was a rising power, and continues to this day.”[101] Perhaps we should read Albizu as an American Socrates: a citizen of the *cosmos* who cared for all people and fought against injustice everywhere in the world, be it in Puerto Rico or Ireland or India. While he cared for all the world’s citizens, he cared most for his fellow Americans – all Americans in all of American nations—and thus held them to a higher ideal, calling his fellow Puerto Ricans to show courage in the face of evil and scolding his US neighbors for valuing their wealth over the wellbeing of their souls. Just as Athens was shocked into painful self-awareness of its own iniquity after their executions of Socrates, Nelson Denis shows us that an awareness of Albizu’s work could have the same effect because “[t]he life, torture and death of Albizu Campos were the direct, nearly inevitable result of American Foreign policy and an ongoing flaw in the American character. The broken body of Albizu throws a spotlight on the fault lines that run through our national psyche.”[102]

Albizu’s sacrifice reminds us of the shameful fact that a powerful nation that once represented the rights of small nations to be free has betrayed its ideals to embody the very tyranny it swore to oppose. Worse yet, the betrayal continues and deepens. Plato taught us that looking at the light of truth is painful, and that cowards would rather turn

away or kill their teacher than become enlightened. But if American citizens of the US want to experience true and healthy pride in our nation we must, like Athens, beg forgiveness of “El Maestro” Pedro Albizu Campos and begin to rectify our 120 year history of injustice in Puerto Rico.

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## Notes

[1] Luis Angel Ferrao, *Pedro Albizu Campos y el nacionalismo puertorriqueño*. (San Juan: Editorial Cultural, 1990).

[2] Juliet Hooker, *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, DuBois, and Vasconcelos* (New York: Oxford), 2.

[3] Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 5.

[4] For more on his biography, read in Spanish his definitive biography by Marisa Rosado, *Pedro Albizu Campos: Las Llamas de la Aurora* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2008). For English readers see Antonio Stevens-Arroyo, “The Catholic Worldview in the Political Philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos: The Death Knoll of Puerto Rican Insularity” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 20.4 (Fall 2002): 53-73; Nelson Denis, *War Against all Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America’s Colony* (New York: Nation Books, 2015).

[5] Anthony de Jesús, “I have endeavored to seize the beautiful opportunity for leaning offered here: Pedro Albizu Campos at Harvard a century ago” *Latino Studies* 9.4 (2011): 473-485.

[6] Julian Go, “Anti-imperialism in the U.S. Territories after 1898,” in Ian Tyrrell, Jay Sexton and Peter Onuf eds., *Empire’s Twin: U.S. Anti-imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2015); Juan Angel Silén, *We, The Puerto Rican People: A Story of Oppression and Resistance*, trans. Edric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press), 1971.

[7] Denis, *War Against all Puerto Ricans*, 254.

[8] *ibid.*, xiii.

[9] Stevens-Arroyo, “The Catholic Worldview in the Political Philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos,” 60.

[10] Denis, *War Against all Puerto Ricans*, 43.

[11] Antonio Stevens-Arroyo, “Jaime Balmes Redux,” in Marina Pérez de Mendiola, ed., *Bridging the Atlantic: Toward a Reassessment of Iberian and Latin American Cultural Ties* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1996), 143.

[12] José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel*, trans. F.J. Simpson (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co, 1922).

[13] Pedro Albizu Campos, “La Bandera de la Raza” in Benjamin Torres, ed. *Obras Escogidas*, 1923-1936. *Tomo II*, (San Juan: Editorial Jelofe, 1975 [1934]), 33. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this essay are by the author.

[14] *ibid.*, 31.

[15] José Martí, “Our America” in Esther Allen ed., *José Martí: Selected Writings*, trans. Esther Allen (New York: Penguin, 2002), 289.

[16] Rodó, *Ariel*, 71.

[17] Martí, “Our America,” 289.

[18] Pedro Albizu Campos, “Defensa del Protectorato frente a la agresión del tirano,” in Laura Albizu-Campos Meneses, Mario Rodríguez León, eds., *Albizu Campos: Escritos*, (Hato Rey: Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas), 217.

[19] Pedro Albizu Campos, “Discurso del ‘Día de la Raza’” in Manuel Maldonado-Denis ed., *La Conciencia Nacional Puertorriqueña*. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1972), 202.

[20] “Día de la Raza” is October 12, which is the day remembering Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the Americas served as a day celebrating Ibero-American or Latin American culture.

[21] Campos, “Discurso,” 193.

[22] *ibid.*, 195.

[23] *ibid.*, 193.

[24] José Vasconcelos, and Didier T. Jaén. *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 10.

[25] Terrance MacMullan, “Fact, Propaganda or Legitimate Aspiration? Frondizi on the Philosophic Unity of the Two Americas,” *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 5:2 (October 2014), 7

[26] R.A. Van Middeldyk and Martin Brumbaugh, *The History of Puerto Rico, from the Spanish Discovery to the American Occupation* (New York, Appleton and Co., 1903), vii.

[27] Campos, “Discurso,” 198.

[28] *ibid.*, 195.

[29] Albizu Campos, “Concepto de la Raza” in Laura Albizu-Campos Menses and Mario Rodríguez León, eds., *Pedro Albizu Campos: Escritos* (Hato Rey: Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2007), 26.

[30] Juliet Hooker, *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, DuBois, and Vasconcelos* (New York: Oxford UP, 2017), 22.

[31] José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/ La raza cósmica*, 18.

[32] Campos, “Discurso,” 195.

[33] Stevens-Arroyo, “The Catholic Worldview in the Political Philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos,” 61.

[34] Campos, “Discurso,” 196.

[35] Ricardo Mariani Ríos, “Pedro Albizu Campos y su concepción de ‘raza’: Una perspectiva decolonial” *Horizontes Decoloniales* vol. 2, (2016), 149. <http://horizontesdecoloniales.gemrip.org/>, Accessed July 19, 2017.

[36] Rodó and Vasconcelos both argued that Latin America was morally superior to English speaking North America in part for its more faithful adherence to Christian ideals of humanity, whereas North Americans were led astray by utilitarianism and Spencerian materialism. However, neither Rodó nor Vasconcelos makes any deep use of Christian or Catholic doctrine in their arguments and neither argument is theologically grounded. As we will see in the next section, Albizu's entire worldview was framed by orthodox Catholic doctrine just as his entire life was dedicated to establishing Puerto Rico as a sovereign and Catholic nation.

[37] Denis, *War Against all Puerto Ricans*, 256.

[38] Villanueva, "Colonial Memory and the Crime of Rhetoric: Pedro Albizu Campos," 636.

[39] Carlos Rojas Osorio, "Albizu Campos: una concepción política del mundo," *Tras las huellas del pasado: mosaico de historia de Puerto Rico: siglos XIX y XX* (2000), 133.

[40] Campos, *Obras*, (I.248).

[41] *ibid.*, (I.133).

[42] *ibid.*, (I.206).

[43] Stevens-Arroyo, "The Political Philosophy of Pedro Albizu Campos," 8.

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